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THE TRAVELLER
—
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GOLDSMITH'S
THE DESERTED VILLAGE
THE TRAVELLER

GRAY'S
ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY

LOUISE POUND, PH.D.
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PREFATORY NOTE

The text of this edition of *The Deserted Village*, *The Traveller*, and the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* is in each case that of the latest revised edition published during the lifetime of the author. Alterations have been limited to a few modernizations in spelling and capitalization, and to some minor changes, necessary for consistency in a school edition, in the punctuation. The aim in the various parts of the Introduction has been to give in condensed form some idea of contemporary conditions, literary and otherwise, as well as some account of the lives and works of the authors. A new feature that will add, it is believed, to the convenience, for school use, of this edition of *The Deserted Village* is the inclusion, in an appendix, of two passages usually read in connection with the poem; namely, the sketch of the poor parson, from Chaucer's Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, and Dryden's "Character of a Good Parson," from his *Tales from Chaucer*.

Obligation to preceding editions of poems so often edited as *The Deserted Village*, *The Traveller*, and the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* is a matter of course, and the present editor takes this opportunity to make grateful acknowledgment. Some specific instances of indebtedness are recorded in the Notes.

LOUISE POUND

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
LINCOLN

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THE DESERTED VILLAGE

THE TRAVELLER

INTRODUCTION TO THE DESERTED VILLAGE AND THE TRAVELLER

The Times

Political Events and History. The chief political events of the years of the eighteenth century in which Goldsmith lived and wrote need little comment. The House of Hanover was newly on the English throne, George II becoming king in 1727, and George III in 1760. The policies of the nation were determined largely by her statesmen, notably Robert Walpole, prime minister from 1721 till 1742, and William Pitt, who became prime minister in 1757. Walpole's policy was to keep peace abroad and to conciliate party and religious differences at home, that the new line of kings might be firmly established and the internal resources of the country be developed. His methods involved much bribery and corruption, in reaction against which a new spirit of patriotism was awakened by Pitt; but under his peaceful guidance the country grew in material wealth as never before. Toward the end of the reign of George II, and in the reign of George III, came more stirring events, and there was still greater national expansion. A vast colonial trade was built up, and commerce and the wealth based upon it became of more and more importance. By the victory of Lord Clive in 1757, firmly establishing the British power in India, and by the capture of Quebec from the French in the same year, establishing British power in Canada, England gained complete control of the vast domains of India and North America, and took the place as a world power which she has since retained among the nations. Under George III the country was less contented than under his predecessor. The

borrowing of vast sums of money to carry on her wars increased the national debt of England to alarming proportions, and in many ways public affairs were mismanaged.

Industrial England. *The Deserted Village* is in unusual degree the product of the age in which it was written, especially of contemporary industrial conditions. The marked growth in commerce, during the eighteenth century, had made it the serious rival of agriculture. Manufacturing also was growing rapidly, the two constituting what Goldsmith calls "trade." The so-called industrial revolution, consequent upon the invention of new machinery, the utilization of steam and water power, and improved methods of transportation and communication, was beginning, although it was to come mainly after Goldsmith's day. The year 1770, when the poem was written, was a period of strong depression with regard to the national future. England was thought to be on the verge of bankruptcy, because of the vast proportions of the national debt; the frequent emigration, really a sign of growing population, was thought ominous; and in particular the country was erroneously believed to be depopulating. Arthur Young, the traveler, wrote in this same year:

> It is asserted by those writers who affect to run down our affairs, that, rich as we are, our population has suffered; that we have lost a million and a half people since the Revolution; and that we are at present declining in numbers.[1]

Another characteristic feature of the time was the inclosure of the old public lands.[2] Innumerable inclosure acts were passed by Parliament between 1760 and 1774; and though the inclosure system was beneficial in the long run, the change caused at the time much suffering. Working classes that had

[1] *Tour of the North of England*, Letter XL.
[2] Gibbins, *Industry in England*, 274, 335.

pastured their cattle on the old common fields lost their privilege when the land was inclosed. Many who had been small farmers were forced to become laborers on the lands of others, to go to factory towns, or to emigrate. Thus a large class of small farmers disappeared. The historian Lecky, citing a contemporary document in proof, writes that "whole villages which had depended on free pasture land and fuel dwindled and perished, and a stream of emigrants passed to America."[1] Others think the conditions sketched in Goldsmith's poem less typical; but there was undoubtedly much suffering.

Literary Conditions. Goldsmith lived and wrote in the transitional period linking the age of Pope, generally called the classical age, with the romantic reaction to be ushered in by Burns, Cowper, and Wordsworth. Literary historians often call this period the "Age of Dr. Johnson," from Goldsmith's friend, Samuel Johnson, the dictionary maker and essayist, who was its literary lawgiver. The social and intellectual ideas of the time were on the whole much the same as in the age preceding, that is, critical rather than creative, showing respect for convention, the centering of interest on form, and the exaltation of "reason" and "common sense" at the expense of individuality and spontaneity. It was not an especially productive period for letters. Among prose writers Goldsmith's leading contemporaries were Dr. Johnson, Gibbon the historian, Burke the orator and essayist, and Sheridan the dramatist. In poetry were Collins, Gray, Young, and Chatterton; thus the showing was even slenderer for poetry than for prose.

Professional writers of this period were likely to encounter many hardships, and much in their lot was sordid and unenviable. They were breaking away from the patronage system previously prevailing, and were now dependent on booksellers, the better modern system of allowing authors a percentage of the profits

[1] *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1903), VII, 260.

on their books being not yet evolved. In the Restoration period literature had been close to politics. The author was dependent, not on the sale of his books to a bookseller, or to the public, but on the munificence of some patron. He sought to attach himself to some distinguished man or to some party. Dryden, Swift, Addison, and Steele all had patronage bestowed upon them in return for some political service. In the time of Dr. Johnson, men of letters became less subservient to patrons or to parties; hence they could be freer and more sincere; but prices were low and uncertain, and an income that was derived from literary drudgery, hack writing on assigned themes regardless of equipment, was likely to be as precarious as it was hard-earned.

Oliver Goldsmith

Early Years. Oliver Goldsmith was born November 10, 1728, in the small village of Pallas, County Longford, Ireland, the fifth child and second son in a family of eight. The Goldsmiths were of English descent, but the family had been for some generations settled in Ireland. The Reverend Charles Goldsmith, Oliver's father, was a humble Protestant curate, whose income averaged forty pounds a year, a not unusual revenue in that period for a country parson. When Oliver was two years old his father succeeded to a more lucrative living at Lissoy, County Westmeath, almost in the geographical center of Ireland, and here the future poet passed the larger part of his boyhood. Oliver was awkward and unattractive as a child, nor did his physical appearance improve with years. He was short, thickset, and ugly, and his face was permanently disfigured, with more than the usual severity, by an attack of the smallpox in his eighth year. He was not a precocious child. His youth gave signs enough of the thoughtless generosity, the

good nature, and the improvidence that were always to characterize him, but gave few or no signs of his literary genius. For the former traits his father was perhaps in part responsible. In *A Citizen of the World*, much of which is autobiographical, Goldsmith writes, presumably of his bringing up by his father:

> We were told that universal benevolence was what first cemented society; we were taught to consider all the wants of mankind as our own . . . he wound us up to be mere machines of pity, and rendered us incapable of withstanding the slightest impulse, made either by real or fictitious distress. In a word, we were perfectly instructed in the art of giving away thousands before we were taught the necessary qualifications of getting a farthing.[1]

Goldsmith has pictured some of his own or his father's traits in the character of Dr. Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, in Honeywood in *The Good-Natured Man*, and in the preacher in *The Deserted Village*.

Goldsmith as a Student. Goldsmith's school career was throughout undistinguished. He was taught his letters by a maidservant and relative, who pronounced him very stupid. At the age of six he was sent to the village school, where his master was an ex-soldier, Thomas or "Paddy" Byrne, the original of the schoolmaster in *The Deserted Village*. He studied under several later masters in schools at Elphin, Athlone, and elsewhere, leaving apparently a record for little more than dullness and awkwardness. His college career was similarly inglorious. Owing to his father's crippling the means of the family to provide Goldsmith's sister with an extravagant marriage portion, Oliver entered Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of seventeen, as a sizar, passing the necessary entrance examination the lowest in the list. The sizar was part student, part servant, and as such Goldsmith waited at table and

[1] Letter XXVII.

performed janitor service. He tided over money difficulties in various ways, — by the generosity of a kind-hearted maternal uncle, Thomas Contarine, his chief support after the death of his father, by loans from friends, by pawning his books, and by the occasional writing of street ballads, which brought him five shillings apiece. His life in college was a hand-to-mouth sort of existence, marked by various frolics and gayeties as well as by numerous humiliations. He was popular with his associates, partly because of his flute playing and his singing, and partly because of his lively disposition and his ability to tell stories; but he quarreled constantly with a rather brutal tutor, took part in a town-and-gown riot and was publicly reprimanded, and once when giving a dancing party attended by not a little hilarity in his college rooms he was surprised in the breach of discipline by an angry tutor and was "personally chastised." The latter disgrace was too much for Goldsmith, and the next day he sold his books and ran away, ultimately turning up at Lissoy. He was taken back to college by his brother Henry, and succeeded in securing his degree of Bachelor of Arts, graduating, as he had entered, the lowest in the list.

Attempts at Various Professions. For two years after leaving college Goldsmith loitered at home, ostensibly fitting himself, at the request of his relatives, for church orders. He lived an idle, irresponsible life, happy and thriftless; and when he finally presented himself for ordination was rejected, perhaps because of his record at college, perhaps because he neglected his preliminary studies, or perhaps, as the curate who was his brother's successor near Lissoy reports, because he presented himself for examination in a pair of flaming scarlet breeches. For a while he tried tutoring; then came a futile attempt to emigrate to America. If we may believe the account Goldsmith wrote to his mother, the ship on which he had engaged passage from Cork sailed without him, while he was

pleasure-seeking in the neighboring country. There was nothing for him to do but to turn up again at Lissoy with empty pockets.

The legal profession was next determined upon, and Goldsmith was provided by his uncle with fifty pounds to take him to Dublin or London to study law. This money he lost on the way at gambling. Goldsmith was hard to help; but his long-tried relatives again got together a purse, and he was sent to Edinburgh to study medicine, this time reaching his destination. He proved popular as usual with his associates, through his various gifts at entertaining. A few evidences remain from this period of the lavishness in dress which was one of his peculiarities. There is a tailor's bill[1] of 1753 containing references to "rich sky-blue satin cloth," "rich Genoa velvet," "fine high claret-coloured cloth," etc., suggesting his strong love of finery. He made little progress in medicine, however, and, becoming restless, succeeded in persuading his uncle that he would be benefited by study under a certain great professor at Leyden. He crossed to the Continent in 1754, after obtaining from his indulgent uncle the sum of twenty pounds.

Wanderings. Goldsmith lingered for some time in Leyden; then impulsively spending the last of his money to buy some high-priced roots for his Uncle Contarine, who was an enthusiastic florist, he left the city, almost penniless, to make a tour of Europe. For two years he roved through France, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, ostensibly studying medicine, but probably doing very little. Possibly he studied a few months at the University of Padua; but he seems to have been more vagabond than student. He was often, of course, in straits for money, depending for subsistence on teaching his native language, on gaming, but generally on his flute and songs, which brought him welcome from the peasantry. In Italy he is

[1] Printed in full in Forster's *Life* (1877), I, 52.

supposed, like the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages, to have disputed on questions of philosophy at universities and convents for his lodging. In *The Vicar of Wakefield* the "philosophic vagabond," who stands probably for Goldsmith himself, is made to say the following:

I had some knowledge of music, with a tolerable voice; I now turned what was once my amusement into a present means of subsistence. I passed among the harmless peasants of Flanders, and among such of the French as were poor enough to be very merry; for I ever found them sprightly in proportion to their wants. Whenever I approached a peasant's house toward nightfall, I played one of my most merry tunes, and that procured me not only a lodging, but subsistence for the next day. I once or twice attempted to play for people of fashion, but they always thought my performance odious, and never rewarded me even with a trifle.[1]

Goldsmith turned his steps homeward in 1756, arriving in London utterly without money, but with a medical degree, picked up we are not sure how or where, possibly at Louvain in Belgium. The record of part of his European rovings is preserved in *The Traveller*.

Makeshifts. On his return Goldsmith attempted various things with little success, and often found himself sorely pressed. In making his way to London he tried, it is thought, the life of a strolling player. His first definite employment was as a chemist's assistant; then he bought a second-hand velvet coat, and gained a little practice as a physician in the Southwark district, across the Thames from London. Rumor says that he acted for a short time as proof corrector for Samuel Richardson, the novelist and printer. It is certain that he was twice usher, an occupation which he extremely disliked, in an academy at Peckham, once for a few months in 1756 and again in 1757 or 1758. Through Dr. Milner, the master, he made the acquaintance, in

[1] Chapter XX.

his first stay at Peckham, of Griffiths, the bookseller and editor of *The Monthly Review*, and soon entered into an agreement with him to furnish copy of all kinds, especially reviews, for the latter's periodical. The agreement did not last very long, mainly because Goldsmith objected to having his work "edited" by the bookseller and his wife; and he went back for a time to Peckham, seeking meanwhile a chance to escape from the drudgery of teaching or of literary hack work. He seems in 1758 to have built high hopes on obtaining the post of physician and surgeon on the coast of Coromandel in British India; but the project came to nothing, perhaps for the same reason that he did not, in that year, secure the position of hospital mate, — namely, that he was found "not qualified."

Literary Work. The engagement to write for *The Monthly Review* was for Goldsmith the beginning of his literary career. His work for Griffiths he followed by various critical articles for a rival publication, *The Critical Review*, edited by the novelist Smollett. He first won recognition by his *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning*, published in 1759, a pretentious but gracefully written survey, for which he had hardly sufficient equipment. After this his life was given up to the drudgery of executing taskwork for various London publishers, the production of his masterpieces at intervals breaking the routine. He started *The Bee*, a periodical in the vein of Addison and Steele's *The Spectator*, in 1759, wrote for *The Busybody*, a similar publication, edited *The Ladies' Magazine*, and contributed his *Chinese Letters*, published in 1762 under the title of *A Citizen of the World*, to *The Public Ledger*. In the way of biographical taskwork he wrote *Memoirs of Voltaire* (1761), *The Life of Richard Nash* (1762), *The Life of Thomas Parnell* (1770), and *The Life of Lord Bolingbroke* (1770). His historical writing, all of it compilation but popularly written and entertaining, comprised a *History of England*

(1763), a *Roman History* (1769), and a *Grecian History* (1773). He wrote also a pleasing if not very scientific *History of Animated Nature*, published after his death. Goldsmith's best works are the poems, *The Traveller* (1764) and *The Deserted Village* (1770), his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and the plays *The Good-Natured Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), the latter being his last important work.

Goldsmith the Man. Goldsmith made a good deal of money by his literary work; indeed, it is calculated that his average income was about two thousand dollars yearly; yet extravagance was part of his nature, and he was very lax in money matters. He always spent more than he earned, hence he was always in debt. The production of *The Good-Natured Man* brought him in about two thousand dollars, most of which was promptly spent on furnishing fine new chambers and on clothes. An anecdote, not wholly trustworthy, of Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson and the sale of *The Vicar of Wakefield* is so characteristic as to be worth repeating as Dr. Johnson tells it, in his biographer's pages:

> I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith . . . , begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea . . . went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told that he had a novel ready for the press. . . . I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill.[1]

[1] Boswell's *Life*, Chapter XIII. But see Dobson's *Goldsmith*, Chapter VII.

For all that his personality was so full of faults, Goldsmith was very lovable, and with few authors has the English world felt so strong a sense of companionship. His unworldliness and guilelessness, his blundering simple goodness, even his vanity, are part of his charm. Few men have had warmer hearts, stronger feelings of sympathy and charity, or more impulsive if inconsiderate generosity. Many anecdotes are preserved testifying to his kindness of heart. A relative and fellow-student tells that when Goldsmith was at college he gave at one time the blankets off his bed to a poor woman who told him a tale of starvation and of five crying children, and himself crept into the ticking of his mattress for shelter from the cold. His literary prominence later in life brought him a host of parasites and hangers-on, who practiced on his credulity and his benevolence. His expenses would have outstripped his income had he earned twice as much as he did, or lived twice as long. One of his most marked extravagances was for dress; he loved to trick out his homely person with finery; but he spent much to relieve the poor and miserable. It was one of his redeeming traits that much of his prodigality was not lavished on himself.

Among his friends Goldsmith counted some of the most illustrious men of the age. He was taken into exclusive literary circles, being one of the members who formed the famous Literary Club. He met Dr. Johnson, the literary autocrat of the day, in 1761, and the latter proved a good friend to him. Other members of the club were Boswell, Johnson's biographer, David Garrick the actor, Edmund Burke the orator, and Sir Joshua Reynolds the painter. Goldsmith seems hardly to have held his own in the wit combats of the club, especially, if we may believe Boswell, with Johnson. "Poor Goldy," as he was called, did not shine in conversation, needing the additional time which the pen gave him, but he was always a general favorite.

Goldsmith died of a fever in 1774, owing two thousand pounds, a big bill at the tailor's among the others. "Was ever," said Dr. Johnson, "a poet so trusted before?"

Place in Eighteenth Century Literature. If not perhaps the greatest, Goldsmith is one of the most pleasing and versatile writers of his century. He did hack work enough to drown the inspiration of most men; yet he stood high as an essayist, he wrote a novel of the prose-pastoral sort which has remained a classic, two of the most pleasing poems, and two of the most entertaining comedies of the age. In spite of the conservative influence of Dr. Johnson, he showed, in many respects, strong romantic tendencies. We should not look to him for work that is profound or penetrative; his education was too desultory, and his lack of exact learning too marked; nor could he succeed when he went beyond his own personal experiences. He was not a deep thinker, nor had he very strong originality or high imagination. Yet he was more original than any one else of his group dared to be; he was among the first to make domestic life interesting in a novel or a play; and, unlike most of his contemporaries, he showed a feeling human element, even in his satires. In his own place he stands secure. His work is always readable. He writes with a fastidious choice of words, if he has not wide command of them, and without a trace of effort. Part of his charm lies in the style, which is clear, animated, and charmingly familiar, and part in the gentle pathos and humanity of his work, of which more will be said later. On the whole, considering the eminent place which he takes as a poet, a prose writer, and a dramatist, he stands perhaps as the representative man of letters of the eighteenth century. Both Pope and Johnson were more dominating figures, and had wider influence, but neither was so representative in range.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Composition and Publication. Some account of Goldsmith's manner of writing verse has been left to us by a contemporary, a young law student and friend named Cook. Goldsmith wrote verse slowly, according to Cook, "not from the tardiness of fancy, but the time he took in pointing the sentiment, and polishing the versification." Of the composition of *The Deserted Village* in particular we are told the following:

> . . . he first sketched a part of his design in prose, in which he threw out his ideas as they occurred to him; he then sat down carefully to versify them, correct them, and add such other ideas as he thought better fitted to the subject; and if sometimes he would exceed his prose design by writing several verses impromptu, these he would take singular pains afterwards to revise, lest they should be found unconnected with his main design. Ten lines, from the fifth to the fifteenth, had been his second morning's work; and when Cook entered his chamber he read them to him aloud. . . . "Come," he added, "let me tell you this is no bad morning's work."[1]

The date of this visit was May, 1768, exactly two years before the poem appeared. Thus the whole process of its composition and revision would seem to have extended over two years.

The Deserted Village was published May 26, 1770, in quarto form. "This day at twelve," announced *The Public Advertiser* of that date, "will be published, price two shillings, *The Deserted Village*, a Poem. By Dr. Goldsmith. Printed for W. Griffin, at Garrick's Head in Catherine Street, Strand." The poem met with immediate success. Five editions were published during the year, most of them containing careful revisions: a second June 7, a third June 14, a fourth June 28,

[1] *European Magazine*, 1793.

and a fifth August 16. What Goldsmith was paid for the poem by the bookseller who published it is not known. The sum was probably small, however; compare l. 414 of his apostrophe to poetry at the close of *The Deserted Village;* also his words to Lord Lisburn, "I cannot afford to court the draggle-tail muses, my Lord, they would let me starve; but by my other labors I can make shift to eat, drink, and have good clothes."[1]

Goldsmith's Purpose in the Poem. The germ of *The Deserted Village* is to be found in ll. 397–412 of *The Traveller*, written a number of years earlier. Many of its leading ideas are to be found here and there in the essays printed in *The Citizen of the World.* As made clear by his introductory dedication, Goldsmith intended *The Deserted Village* to be an elegy over the decay of the peasantry, and an invective against the increase of luxury. He held that undue national opulence brings national corruption and national decay. In some of his economic theories the poet is not to be followed. There was no real depopulation of the country going on, as he and many others believed; rather was the contrary true; and, had there been such depopulation, it would have been erroneous to ascribe it to the increase of material prosperity, really a healthful sign, accompanying the rapid national expansion. In other respects Goldsmith is better borne out by the economic history of the time; for example, when he deplores the accumulation of land under one owner as inimical to the small farmer, or pictures the breaking up of homes consequent upon the inclosure of the commons, and the distress of the evicted wanderers. A number of such evictions he himself witnessed. The result was not, however, unless in isolated cases, the wholesale emigration of the evicted, and in several features Goldsmith's picture is probably overcolored.

[1] Forster's *Life*, II, 209.

Auburn and Lissoy. In many respects Goldsmith draws on memories of his early life for his poem,[1] and for this reason Auburn and Lissoy were early identified by critics. Lord Macaulay, on the other hand, took the ground that Auburn is an inconsistent village, assuredly not to be identified too closely with Lissoy or with any other spot. Goldsmith confuses, Macaulay says, the rural life of two countries, blending his Irish recollections and his English experiences; the village in its prosperity and happiness is English, in its unhappiness and desolation Irish. It seems now that the poet's picture of Auburn in its decline is probably truer and more English than Macaulay admits,[2] although allowances are to be made for exaggeration, especially of contrast. Goldsmith undoubtedly makes use both of his early recollections of Lissoy and of his English observations; but he exaggerates or idealizes to suit his general purpose, and to point his moral, and very definite localizing should not be attempted.

Form. The verse form of Goldsmith's poem is the heroic couplet, consisting of two iambic pentameter lines linked by rhyme, which in the eighteenth century was the ruling poetic form. Gray departed from the couplet form in his *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, printed in 1750, as had Thomson earlier; and Wordsworth and Coleridge were soon to complete the overthrow of its sovereignty, at least as written in the manner of Pope. Goldsmith was more conservative, and adhered to the classical tradition. In the handling of Chaucer, in the fourteenth century, with whom the verse form first appears, the thought is allowed to run on from line to line or from couplet to couplet, stopping somewhere within the line if the author wish; and such was the handling of the Elizabethans, or of

[1] Cf. notes on ll. 12, 37, 131, 196, and others.

[2] Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1903), VII, 260.

nineteenth century poets like Keats and Browning. With Pope, the autocrat of the classical school, the handling was more inflexible, and his couplets and Chaucer's would hardly be recognized as written in the same form. Pope's verse exhibits almost invariably end-stopped couplets and unit lines, and he composed with a point and finish, with a correctness and with a concise and lucid phraseology that for a long time were held to be standard-giving. In Goldsmith's day emancipation was in the air; but Dr. Johnson was a firm classicist, his own verse being exclusively in Pope's manner, and Goldsmith was too good a disciple to dream of departing from the conservative vein of the artificial-conventional school. Yet in a comparison of the couplets of Goldsmith and Pope some differences may be noted. Goldsmith's lines are not less elaborated and conventional, and his diction makes no nearer approach to the fresh or the individual. Yet the glitter and point of Pope's work is more subdued with Goldsmith; and with the latter the paragraph, not the couplet, is the unit. Goldsmith's lines show, unlike Pope's, the influence of blank verse. It is, however, in the spirit of the poem, in the personal touches and descriptive passages, rather than in the form, that *The Deserted Village* is transitional, foreboding the departure of didactic poetry and the coming of another and freer school.

Popularity of the Poem. At the time when it was written the moralizing tone of Goldsmith's poem no doubt assisted its popularity. The fashion of the age tended towards sentimental reflection; note poems like Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–1744), Akenside's *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1744), Johnson's *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (1750), and many others. The contrast between the luxury of the rich and the innocent and simple pleasures of country folk is a theme which may still be counted upon to enlist the sympathies; moreover the subject

fitted Goldsmith personally, and his experience equipped him admirably to handle it. Others of his generation would probably have made the poem purely didactic, a sort of homily on the dangers of increasing wealth; but he chose to handle his material in a simpler and more personal way, anticipating the next generation of poets in his humanitarianism and in his return to the expression of genuine feeling, if he did not anticipate them in verse form. He is most perfunctory in the didactic passages, most natural in the feeling passages. The majority of readers soon forget the moralizing purpose of the poem, and its economic theme, and remember it only as a picture of a village in its prosperity and in its desolation. Goldsmith cared much for simple rustic life, — he had himself been close to it; and the poem as he wrote it springs from sincere interest and genuine sorrow. It is not the finish of the couplets or the didactic tone that gives *The Deserted Village* its permanent significance and accounts for the place which it has won in the popular heart; rather are these derived from the grace and the tender feeling of the poem as a whole, the convincing humanity of its characterizations, and its sympathetic descriptions of village life and village scenes.

The Traveller

Composition and Publication. *The Traveller* was published December 19, 1764, six years before *The Deserted Village.* Its inception dates back, however, to 1755 or 1756. In the Dedication to his brother the poet tells that part of it was written during his stay in Switzerland, though just what part we shall probably never know. The completing of the poem, with various revisions and retouchings, occupied about eight years. The manuscript of *The Traveller* is said to have been crowded with interlineations and corrections. Goldsmith was very careful in

his composition of poetry. He did not hurry into it, as with his prose hack work, but considered every line. Nor did the retouchings stop with publication. Between the original edition and the sixth, forty-four lines were omitted and thirty-six added. The title-page read: "The Traveller; or A Prospect of Society. A Poem. Inscribed to the Rev. Mr. Henry Goldsmith. By Oliver Goldsmith, M.B. London. Printed for J. Newbery, in St. Paul's Church-yard, MDCCLXV." It was published in quarto, and the price was one shilling and sixpence. The poet is said by his biographer Irving to have received twenty pounds for it from the publisher.

The Traveller was the first work to which Goldsmith signed his name. This he was emboldened to do by the fact that it had the approval of Dr. Johnson, who had read the proofs and added a line here and there (see note on l. 420). Johnson also wrote an encomium on it, when it appeared, in *The Critical Review*. *The Traveller* was immediately successful. Four editions were printed in eight months, and the number swelled to nine before the poet's death ten years later. Before its publication, Goldsmith could with difficulty get a hearing, even among his own friends, but the success of *The Traveller* gave him prestige at once.

Plan and Purpose of the Poem. The plan of the poem is simple and striking. An English traveller sitting on an Alpine height, below which three great countries extend into the distance, views the prospect, thinks of his personal lot, and moralizes on the scenes below. He passes in review the leading characteristics and the general conditions of Italy, Switzerland, France, then of Holland and England, and reaches the conclusion that human felicity depends less on political institutions than on our own minds. Governments affect but little individual happiness, for the latter is a state of mind, available to all alike. "I have endeavoured to show," he says in the Dedication (compare

also lines 75, 93, 429, etc.), "that there may be equal happiness in states that are differently governed from our own; that every state has a particular principle of happiness; and that this principle in each may be carried to a mischievous success."

As in the case of *The Deserted Village*, the general lesson, or teaching, of the poem is open to question. It is hardly true that the form of government under which people live, and the happiness of the inhabitants, have little or no relation. Dr. Johnson liked to affirm, as Goldsmith does here, that one form of government is as conducive to human happiness as another; but the opportunities for individual development and for individual freedom are in too great a degree under governmental control for such a generalization to be valid. Fortunately the success of *The Traveller* and the pleasure to be had from reading it do not depend on the soundness of its philosophical teaching.

Models. Goldsmith had no particular model for *The Traveller*. The poem is of a type generally liked in the mid-eighteenth century, which had marked preference for broad surveys and moralizing reflections on society and human life. The mood of gentle, melancholy meditation, the preferred mood of the time, is that of the *Elegy* and *The Deserted Village* as well. There is no spirit of revolt, no call to action; the temper is one of resignation. It is customary, however, to associate with *The Traveller* several compositions which may possibly have influenced Goldsmith here and there in its composition. The author plainly knew Addison's poetical *Letter from Italy* (1701), though there is no special debt, in general or in detail; and James Thomson's *Liberty* (1734–1736) and Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) have something in common with Goldsmith's poem. In fact, Thomson seems to have had some work similar to *The Traveller* in mind when he wrote in a private letter to a friend that "a poetical landscape of countries, mixed with moral observations on their characters and people, would not be an

ill-judged undertaking"; but Thomson never carried out his purpose, nor could Goldsmith have seen his letter.

Language and Versification. A characterization of the style of *The Deserted Village* holds for the earlier poem, *The Traveller.* In both, the execution of the couplets is very regular. At times Goldsmith uses trochees instead of iambs; but there are no alexandrines (i.e. lines of six feet), there are no triplets, and there are few run-over lines. As regards style, the poems show the same liking for the personification of abstract terms, for set epithets, and for words of Latin rather than vernacular origin. There was no striving in the mid-eighteenth century for the fresh epithet or the new way of saying a familiar thing, as among later generations of poets; and this should be kept in mind when Goldsmith's poems are read. The surprises, the impetuous outbursts and shifts of movement, to be met in the verse of Shelley or Keats would have shocked by their "wildness" an age that deliberately preferred smooth correctness in execution, as it preferred evenness of mood. It should be remembered, too, that the heroic couplets of the eighteenth century were meant to be read aloud. Their precise character and their lucidity give them an advantage, for oral purposes, over the freer, vaguer, though more varied, style which succeeded. Goldsmith's verse is at its best when read aloud, while the verse of many favorite poets of the next century, written for the eye almost more than for the ear, might mean little when heard for the first time.

The Poem as a Whole. The human element, which forms so attractive a phase of *The Deserted Village* and gives the poem individuality, is faint or wanting in *The Traveller.* The latter, written earlier, is preoccupied mainly with abstractions and moralizings, while *The Deserted Village* is a cross between the poem of the generalizing type liked in the mid-eighteenth century and the concrete poem of human interest which was to

displace it in favor in the next generation. But Goldsmith is always successful when he draws upon his personal experiences, and *The Traveller* resolves itself into a poem of personal observations based on his European wanderings. It shows, in general, sound sense, and maintains a high level of poetic execution. Goldsmith never writes without revealing grace, gentle humor and pathos, and genuineness of feeling; and *The Traveller* is no exception. It pleases by its fastidiousness and refinement of expression; it is always clear; and it is so easily memorable that even a casual reading fixes it in the mind.

Contemporary Opinion. *The Traveller* was praised by the best critics of the time. Johnson, who was indefatigable as an advertising agent for his friends, pronounced it "the best poem which had appeared since the age of Pope." Boswell assumed that Dr. Johnson had written it, and when this was denied, he intimated that, though Johnson might not have written it with his own hand, yet except for his influence it never would have been written. "He imitates you, sir," he said when Johnson was praising *The Traveller*. "Why, no, sir," answered Johnson, "Jack Hawksworth was one of my imitators, but not Goldsmith. Goldy, sir, has great merit." "But, sir, he is much indebted to you for getting so high in the public estimation," said Boswell. "Why, sir," replied Johnson, "he has perhaps got *sooner* to it by his intimacy with me."

When Johnson, not long after its publication, took the poem to Sir Joshua Reynolds's house and read it aloud to the painter's sister, she is said to have remarked at the close, "Well, I never more shall think Dr. Goldsmith ugly." More conventional was Bennett Langton's criticism, who said of it, four years after Goldsmith's death, "There is not a bad line in *The Traveller*— not one of Dryden's careless verses." Charles James Fox, the statesman and orator, pronounced it, according to Reynolds, one of the finest poems in the English language. This remark,

repeated to Johnson, brought from him the comment, "The merit of *The Traveller* is so well established that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it, nor his censure diminish it." "Goldsmith," he continued, "was a man who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster Abbey; and every year he lived he would have deserved it better." Another admirer of the poem was Edmund Burke, eminent as a statesman, an orator, and a man of letters, and one of the keenest thinkers and best critics of the eighteenth century.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Biographies of Goldsmith have been written by Sir James Prior (1837), John Forster (1849), Washington Irving (1849), Sir Walter Scott (1828), William Black (English Men of Letters Series) (1878), Austin Dobson (Great Writers Series) (1888), Richard Ashe King (1910), and F. Frankfort Moore (1910).

For essays on Goldsmith, see those by Macaulay in *Miscellaneous Essays* or in the Encyclopædia Britannica, Thackeray in *English Humorists*, De Quincey in *The Eighteenth Century Scholarship and Literature*, and Leigh Hunt in his *Classic Tales*.

For the general conditions and life of the period, consult Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Dobson's *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, Traill's *Social England*, Vol. V, Gibbins's *Industry in England* or Warner's *Landmarks in English Industrial History*, and Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*. An account of the London of Goldsmith's day is given in Besant's *London in the Eighteenth Century*.

Goldsmith is the hero of the novel, *The Jessamy Bride*, by F. Frankfort Moore.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

DEDICATION

To Sir Joshua Reynolds

Dear Sir, — I can have no expectations, in an address of this kind, either to add to your reputation, or to establish my own. You can gain nothing from my admiration, as I am ignorant of that art in which you are said to excel; and I may lose much by the severity of your judgment, as few have a juster taste in poetry than you. Setting interest, therefore, aside, to which I never paid much attention, I must be indulged at present in following my affections. The only dedication I ever made was to my brother, because I loved him better than most other men. He is since dead. Permit me to inscribe this poem to you.

How far you may be pleased with the versification and mere mechanical parts of this attempt, I do not pretend to inquire; but I know you will object (and indeed several of our best and wisest friends concur in the opinion), that the depopulation it deplores is nowhere to be seen, and the disorders it laments are only to be found in the poet's own imagination. To this I can scarce make any other answer than that I sincerely believe what I have written; that I have taken all possible pains, in my country excursions, for these four or five years past, to be certain of what I allege; and that all my views and inquiries have led me to believe those miseries real, which I here attempt to display. But this is not the place to enter into an inquiry whether the country be depopulating or not; the discussion

would take up much room, and I should prove myself, at best, an indifferent politician to tire the reader with a long preface when I want his unfatigued attention to a long poem.

In regretting the depopulation of the country, I inveigh against the increase of our luxuries; and here I also expect the shout of modern politicians against me. For twenty or thirty years past it has been the fashion to consider luxury as one of the greatest national advantages; and all the wisdom of antiquity, in that particular, as erroneous. Still, however, I must remain a professed ancient on that head, and continue to think those luxuries prejudicial to states by which so many vices are introduced and so many kingdoms have been undone. Indeed, so much has been poured out of late on the other side of the question, that merely for the sake of novelty and variety, one would sometimes wish to be in the right.

I am, Dear Sir, your sincere friend, and ardent admirer,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain;
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!
How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round.
And still, as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,

While secret laughter tittered round the place;
The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove.
These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught even toil to please:
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed:
These were thy charms — but all these charms are fled!

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries;
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man;

For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose,
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
These gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green;
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.
Here, as I take my solitary rounds
Amidst thy tangling walks and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs — and God has given my share —
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting, by repose:
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,

Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as an hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return, — and die at home at last.

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care, that never must be mine,
How happy he who crowns in shades like these,
A youth of labour with an age of ease;
Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
And, since 't is hard to combat, learns to fly!
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;
Nor surly porter stands in guilty state,
To spurn imploring famine from the gate;
But on he moves to meet his latter end,
Angels around befriending virtue's friend;
Bends to the grave with unperceived decay,
While resignation gently slopes the way;
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,
His heaven commences ere the world be past!

Sweet was the sound, when oft, at evening's close,
Up yonder hill the village murmur rose.
There, as I past with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came softened from below;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school,

The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind; —
These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And filled each pause the nightingale had made.
But now the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
But all the bloomy flush of life is fled.
All but yon widowed, solitary thing,
That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;
She, wretched matron, forced in age, for bread,
To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn;
She only left of all the harmless train,
The sad historian of the pensive plain.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train;
He chid their wanderings but relieved their pain:
The long remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;

The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sate by his fire, and talked the night away,
Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings leaned to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;

Even children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.
His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest,
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distrest;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school.
A man severe he was, and stern to view;
I knew him well, and every truant knew:
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
The day's disasters in his morning face;
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the busy whisper circling round
Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.
Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault;
The village all declared how much he knew:
'T was certain he could write, and cipher too;
Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And even the story ran that he could gauge:
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,
For, even tho' vanquished, he could argue still;
While words of learned length and thundering sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;

And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.

But past is all his fame. The very spot
Where many a time he triumphed is forgot.
Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where grey-beard mirth and smiling toil retired,
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlour splendours of that festive place:
The whitewashed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;
The pictures placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose;
The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,
With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay;
While broken teacups, wisely kept for shew,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.

Vain, transitory splendours! could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall?
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart.
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;

The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be prest,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art;
Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,—
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
And, even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy.

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen, who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
'T is yours to judge, how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and an happy land.
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
And shouting folly hails them from her shore;
Hoards, even beyond the miser's wish abound,
And rich men flock from all the world around.
Yet count our gains. This wealth is but a name
That leaves our useful products still the same.
Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds:

The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth,
Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth;
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green:
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world supplies;
While thus the land, adorned for pleasure all
In barren splendour feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female unadorned and plain,
Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,
Slights every borrowed charm that dress supplies,
Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes;
But when those charms are past, for charms are frail,
When time advances, and when lovers fail,
She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,
In all the glaring impotence of dress.
Thus fares the land by luxury betrayed:
In nature's simplest charms at first arrayed;
But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise;
While, scourged by famine from the smiling land,
The mournful peasant leads his humble band,
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms, — a garden and a grave.

Where, then, ah! where shall poverty reside,
To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride?
If to some common's fenceless limits strayed
He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,
Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,
And even the bare-worn common is denied.

If to the city sped — what waits him there?
To see profusion that he must not share;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury, and thin mankind;
To see those joys the sons of pleasure know
Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe.
Here while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade;
Here while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign,
Here, richly deckt, admits the gorgeous train:
Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!
Sure these denote one universal joy!
Are these thy serious thoughts? — Ah! turn thine eyes
Where the poor houseless shivering female lies.
She once, perhaps, in village plenty blest,
Has wept at tales of innocence distrest;
Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn:
Now lost to all; her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,
And, pinched with cold, and shrinking from the shower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,
When idly first, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel, and robes of country brown.

Do thine, sweet Auburn, — thine, the loveliest train, —
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
Even now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they ask a little bread!

Ah, no. To distant climes, a dreary scene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe.
Far different there from all that charmed before,
The various terrors of that horrid shore;
Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely shed intolerable day;
Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,
But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;
Those poisonous fields with rank luxuriance crowned,
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around;
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;
Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey,
And savage men more murderous still than they;
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,
Mingling the ravaged landscape with the skies.
Far different these from every former scene,
The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,
That only sheltered thefts of harmless love.

Good Heaven! what sorrows gloomed that parting day,
That called them from their native walks away;
When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,
Hung round their bowers, and fondly looked their last,
And took a long farewell, and wished in vain
For seats like these beyond the western main,
And shuddering still to face the distant deep,
Returned and wept, and still returned to weep.
The good old sire the first prepared to go
To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe;

But, for himself, in conscious virtue brave,
He only wished for worlds beyond the grave.
His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpless years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,
And blest the cot where every pleasure rose,
And kist her thoughtless babes with many a tear,
And claspt them close, in sorrow doubly dear,
Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief
In all the silent manliness of grief.

O luxury! thou curst by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
Kingdoms by thee, to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigour not their own.
At every draught more large and large they grow,
A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe;
Till, sapped their strength, and every part unsound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.

Even now the devastation is begun,
And half the business of destruction done;
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
I see the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
That idly waiting flaps with every gale,
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
Contented toil, and hospitable care,

And kind connubial tenderness are there;
And piety with wishes placed above,
And steady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;
Unfit in these degenerate times of shame
To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell, and O! where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,
Redress the rigours of the inclement clime;
Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain;
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
Teach him that states, of native strength possest,
Tho' very poor, may still be very blest;
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As ocean sweeps the laboured mole away;
While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

THE TRAVELLER

DEDICATION

To the Rev. Henry Goldsmith

Dear Sir, — I am sensible that the friendship between us can acquire no new force from the ceremonies of a Dedication; and perhaps it demands an excuse thus to prefix your name to my attempts, which you decline giving with your own. But as a part of this poem was formerly written to you from Switzerland, the whole can now with propriety be inscribed only to you. It will also throw a light upon many parts of it, when the reader understands that it is addressed to a man who, despising fame and fortune, has retired early to happiness and obscurity, with an income of forty pounds a year.

I now perceive, my dear brother, the wisdom of your humble choice. You have entered upon a sacred office, where the harvest is great, and the labourers are but few; while you have left the field of ambition, where the labourers are many and the harvests not worth carrying away. But of all kinds of ambition, what from the refinement of the times, from differing systems of criticism, and from the divisions of poetry, that which pursues poetical fame is the wildest.

Poetry makes a principal amusement among unpolished nations; but in a country verging to the extremes of refinement, painting and music come in for a share. As these offer the feeble mind less laborious entertainment, they at first rival poetry, and at length supplant her; they engross all that favour

once shown to her; and though but younger sisters, seize upon the elder's birthright.

Yet, however this art may be neglected by the powerful, it is still in greater danger from the mistaken efforts of the learned to improve it. What criticism have we not heard of late in favour of blank verse and Pindaric odes, choruses, anapests, and iambics, alliterative care and happy negligence! Every absurdity has now a champion to defend it, and as he is generally much in the wrong, so he has always much to say, for error was ever talkative.

But there is an enemy to this art still more dangerous; I mean party. Party entirely distorts the judgment, and destroys the taste. When the mind is once infected with the disease, it can only find pleasure in what contributes to increase the distemper. Like the tiger, that seldom desists from pursuing man after having once preyed upon human flesh, the reader who has once gratified his appetite with calumny makes ever after the most agreeable feast upon murdered reputation. Such readers generally admire some half-witted thing who wants to be thought a bold man, having lost the character of a wise one. Him they dignify with the name of poet: his tawdry lampoons are called satires; his turbulence is said to be his force, and his frenzy, fire.

What reception a poem may find, which has neither abuse, party, nor blank verse to support it, I cannot tell, nor am I solicitous to know. My aims are right. Without espousing the cause of any party, I have attempted to moderate the rage of all. I have endeavoured to show, that there may be equal happiness in states that are differently governed from our own; that every state has a particular principle of happiness, and that this principle in each may be carried to a mischievous excess. There are few can judge, better than yourself, how far these positions are illustrated in this poem.

I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate Brother,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

THE TRAVELLER

OR, A PROSPECT OF SOCIETY

Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,
Or by the lazy Scheldt or wandering Po;
Or onward, where the rude Carinthian boor
Against the houseless stranger shuts the door;
Or where Campania's plain forsaken lies,
A weary waste expanding to the skies:
Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee;
Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.

Eternal blessings crown my earliest friend,
And round his dwelling guardian saints attend!
Blest be that spot where cheerful guests retire
To pause from toil, and trim their evening fire:
Blest that abode where want and pain repair,
And every stranger finds a ready chair:
Blest be those feasts with simple plenty crowned,
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale;
Or press the bashful stranger to his food,
And learn the luxury of doing good.

But me, not destined such delights to share,
My prime of life in wandering spent and care, —

Impelled, with steps unceasing, to pursue
Some fleeting good that mocks me with the view,—
That, like the circle bounding earth and skies,
Allures from far, yet, as I follow, flies;
My fortune leads to traverse realms alone,
And find no spot of all the world my own.

Even now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,
I sit me down a pensive hour to spend;
And placed on high above the storm's career,
Look downward where an hundred realms appear —
Lakes, forests, cities, plains extending wide,
The pomp of kings, the shepherd's humbler pride.

When thus Creation's charms around combine,
Amidst the store, should thankless pride repine?
Say, should the philosophic mind disdain
That good which makes each humbler bosom vain?
Let school-taught pride dissemble all it can,
These little things are great to little man;
And wiser he, whose sympathetic mind
Exults in all the good of all mankind.
Ye glittering towns, with wealth and splendour crowned,
Ye fields, where summer spreads profusion round,
Ye lakes, whose vessels catch the busy gale,
Ye bending swains, that dress the flowery vale;
For me your tributary stores combine:
Creation's heir, the world, the world is mine!

As some lone miser, visiting his store,
Bends at his treasure, counts, recounts it o'er;
Hoards after hoards his rising raptures fill,
Yet still he sighs, for hoards are wanting still:

Thus to my breast alternate passions rise,
Pleased with each good that Heaven to man supplies:
Yet oft a sigh prevails, and sorrows fall,
To see the hoard of human bliss so small;
And oft I wish amidst the scene to find
Some spot to real happiness consigned,
Where my worn soul, each wandering hope at rest,
May gather bliss to see my fellows blest.

But where to find that happiest spot below
Who can direct, when all pretend to know?
The shuddering tenant of the frigid zone
Boldly proclaims that happiest spot his own;
Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,
And his long nights of revelry and ease:
The naked negro, panting at the line,
Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine,
Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.
Such is the patriot's boast where'er we roam;
His first, best country ever is at home.
And yet, perhaps, if countries we compare,
And estimate the blessings which they share,
Though patriots flatter, still shall wisdom find
An equal portion dealt to all mankind;
As different good, by Art or Nature given,
To different nations makes their blessings even.

Nature, a mother kind alike to all,
Still grants her bliss at Labour's earnest call;
With food as well the peasant is supplied
On Idra's cliff as Arno's shelvy side;
And though the rocky-crested summits frown,
These rocks by custom turn to beds of down.

From Art more various are the blessings sent:
Wealth, commerce, honour, liberty, content.
Yet these each other's power so strong contest,
That either seems destructive of the rest.
Where wealth and freedom reign, contentment fails,
And honour sinks where commerce long prevails.
Hence every state, to one loved blessing prone,
Conforms and models life to that alone:
Each to the favourite happiness attends,
And spurns the plan that aims at other ends;
Till, carried to excess in each domain,
This favourite good begets peculiar pain.

But let us try these truths with closer eyes,
And trace them through the prospect as it lies:
Here for a while, my proper cares resigned,
Here let me sit in sorrow for mankind;
Like yon neglected shrub, at random cast,
That shades the steep, and sighs at every blast.

Far to the right, where Apennine ascends,
Bright as the summer, Italy extends;
Its uplands sloping deck the mountain's side,
Woods over woods in gay theatric pride;
While oft some temple's mouldering tops between
With venerable grandeur mark the scene.

Could Nature's bounty satisfy the breast,
The sons of Italy were surely blest.
Whatever fruits in different climes are found,
That proudly rise, or humbly court the ground;
Whatever blooms in torrid tracts appear,
Whose bright succession decks the varied year;

Whatever sweets salute the northern sky
With vernal lives that blossom but to die;
These, here disporting, own the kindred soil,
Nor ask luxuriance from the planter's toil;
While sea-born gales their gelid wings expand
To winnow fragrance round the smiling land.

But small the bliss that sense alone bestows,
And sensual bliss is all the nation knows.
In florid beauty groves and fields appear;
Man seems the only growth that dwindles here.
Contrasted faults through all his manners reign:
Though poor, luxurious; though submissive, vain;
Though grave, yet trifling; zealous, yet untrue;
And even in penance planning sins anew.
All evils here contaminate the mind
That opulence departed leaves behind;
For wealth was theirs, not far removed the date,
When commerce proudly flourished through the state;
At her command the palace learned to rise,
Again the long-fallen column sought the skies,
The canvas glowed, beyond even nature warm,
The pregnant quarry teemed with human form;
Till, more unsteady than the southern gale,
Commerce on other shores displayed her sail;
While nought remained of all that riches gave,
But towns unmanned, and lords without a slave:
And late the nation found with fruitless skill
Its former strength was but plethoric ill.

Yet still the loss of wealth is here supplied
By arts, the splendid wrecks of former pride;
From these the feeble heart and long-fallen mind
An easy compensation seem to find.

Here may be seen, in bloodless pomp arrayed,
The pasteboard triumph and the cavalcade;
Processions formed for piety and love,
A mistress or a saint in every grove.
By sports like these are all their cares beguiled,
The sports of children satisfy the child;
Each nobler aim, repress by long control,
Now sinks at last, or feebly mans the soul;
While low delights, succeeding fast behind,
In happier meanness occupy the mind.
As in those domes where Cæsars once bore sway,
Defaced by time and tottering in decay,
There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed;
And, wondering man could want the larger pile,
Exults, and owns his cottage with a smile.

My soul, turn from them, turn we to survey
Where rougher climes a nobler race display,
Where the bleak Swiss their stormy mansion tread,
And force a churlish soil for scanty bread.
No product here the barren hills afford
But man and steel, the soldier and his sword;
No vernal blooms their torpid rocks array,
But winter lingering chills the lap of May;
No zephyr fondly sues the mountain's breast,
But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest.

Yet still, even here, content can spread a charm,
Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm.
Though poor the peasant's hut, his feasts though small,
He sees his little lot the lot of all;
Sees no contiguous palace rear its head
To shame the meanness of his humble shed;

No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal
To make him loathe his vegetable meal;
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,
Each wish contracting fits him to the soil.
Cheerful at morn he wakes from short repose,
Breasts the keen air, and carols as he goes;
With patient angle trolls the finny deep;
Or drives his venturous plough-share to the steep,
Or seeks the den, where snow-tracks mark the way,
And drags the struggling savage into day.
At night returning, every labour sped,
He sits him down the monarch of a shed;
Smiles by his cheerful fire, and round surveys
His children's looks, that brighten at the blaze;
While his loved partner, boastful of her hoard,
Displays her cleanly platter on the board:
And haply too some pilgrim, thither led,
With many a tale repays the nightly bed.

Thus every good his native wilds impart,
Imprints the patriot passion on his heart;
And even those ills that round his mansion rise
Enhance the bliss his scanty fund supplies.
Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms;
And as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
Clings close and closer to the mother's breast,
So the loud torrent and the whirlwind's roar
But bind him to his native mountains more.

Such are the charms to barren states assigned;
Their wants but few, their wishes all confined.
Yet let them only share the praises due;
If few their wants, their pleasures are but few;

For every want that stimulates the breast
Becomes a source of pleasure when redrest.
Whence from such lands each pleasing science flies,
That first excites desire, and then supplies;
Unknown to them, when sensual pleasures cloy,
To fill the languid pause with finer joy;
Unknown those powers that raise the soul to flame,
Catch every nerve and vibrate through the frame.
Their level life is but a smouldering fire,
Unquenched by want, unfanned by strong desire;
Unfit for raptures, or, if raptures cheer
On some high festival of once a year,
In wild excess the vulgar breast takes fire,
Till, buried in debauch, the bliss expire.

But not their joys alone thus coarsely flow:
Their morals, like their pleasures, are but low;
For, as refinement stops, from sire to son
Unaltered, unimproved, the manners run;
And love's and friendship's finely pointed dart
Fall blunted from each indurated heart.
Some sterner virtues o'er the mountain's breast
May sit, like falcons cowering on the nest;
But all the gentler morals, such as play
Through life's more cultured walks, and charm the way,
These, far dispersed, on timorous pinions fly,
To sport and flutter in a kinder sky.

To kinder skies, where gentler manners reign,
I turn; and France displays her bright domain.
Gay, sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
Pleased with thyself, whom all the world can please,
How often have I led thy sportive choir,
With tuneless pipe beside the murmuring Loire!

Where shading elms along the margin grew,
And freshened from the wave the zephyr flew;
And haply, though my harsh touch, faltering still,
But mocked all tune, and marred the dancer's skill;
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power,
And dance, forgetful of the noon-tide hour.
Alike all ages. Dames of ancient days
Have led their children through the mirthful maze,
And the gay grandsire, skilled in gestic lore,
Has frisked beneath the burden of threescore.

So blest a life these thoughtless realms display;
Thus idly busy rolls their world away.
Theirs are those arts that mind to mind endear,
For honour forms the social temper here:
Honour, that praise which real merit gains,
Or even imaginary worth obtains,
Here passes current: paid from hand to hand,
It shifts in splendid traffic round the land:
From courts to camps, to cottages, it strays,
And all are taught an avarice of praise.
They please, are pleased; they give to get esteem;
Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they seem.

But while this softer art their bliss supplies,
It gives their follies also room to rise;
For praise too dearly loved, or warmly sought,
Enfeebles all internal strength of thought,
And the weak soul, within itself unblest,
Leans for all pleasure on another's breast.
Hence ostentation here, with tawdry art,
Pants for the vulgar praise which fools impart;
Here vanity assumes her pert grimace,
And trims her robes of frieze with copper lace;

Here beggar pride defrauds her daily cheer,
To boast one splendid banquet once a year;
The mind still turns where shifting fashion draws,
Nor weighs the solid worth of self-applause.

To men of other minds my fancy flies,
Embosomed in the deep where Holland lies.
Methinks her patient sons before me stand,
Where the broad ocean leans against the land;
And, sedulous to stop the coming tide,
Lift the tall rampire's artificial pride.
Onward, methinks, and diligently slow,
The firm connected bulwark seems to grow;
Spreads its long arms amidst the watery roar,
Scoops out an empire, and usurps the shore —
While the pent ocean, rising o'er the pile,
Sees an amphibious world beneath him smile;
The slow canal, the yellow-blossomed vale,
The willow-tufted bank, the gliding sail,
The crowded mart, the cultivated plain,
A new creation rescued from his reign.

Thus, while around the wave-subjected soil
Impels the native to repeated toil,
Industrious habits in each bosom reign,
And industry begets a love of gain.
Hence all the good from opulence that springs,
With all those ills superfluous treasure brings,
Are here displayed. There much loved wealth imparts
Convenience, plenty, elegance, and arts;
But view them closer, craft and fraud appear,
Even liberty itself is bartered here.
At gold's superior charms all freedom flies;
The needy sell it, and the rich man buys;

A land of tyrants, and a den of slaves,
Here wretches seek dishonourable graves,
And calmly bent, to servitude conform,
Dull as their lakes that slumber in the storm.
Heavens! how unlike their Belgic sires of old!
Rough, poor, content, ungovernably bold,
War in each breast, and freedom on each brow;
How much unlike the sons of Britain now!

Fired at the sound, my genius spreads her wing,
And flies where Britain courts the western spring;
Where lawns extend that scorn Arcadian pride,
And brighter streams than famed Hydaspes glide.
There all around the gentlest breezes stray;
There gentle music melts on every spray;
Creation's mildest charms are there combined,
Extremes are only in the master's mind!
Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state,
With daring aims irregularly great;
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by;
Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
By forms unfashioned, fresh from nature's hand,
Fierce in their native hardiness of soul,
True to imagined right, above control,
While even the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
And learns to venerate himself as man.

Thine, Freedom, thine the blessings pictured here;
Thine are those charms that dazzle and endear;
Too blest, indeed, were such without alloy:
But fostered even by Freedom ills annoy:
That independence Britons prize too high
Keeps man from man, and breaks the social tie;

The self-dependent lordlings stand alone,
All claims that bind and sweeten life unknown.
Here, by the bonds of nature feebly held,
Minds combat minds, repelling and repelled;
Ferments arise, imprisoned factions roar,
Represt ambition struggles round her shore,
Till, overwrought, the general system feels
Its motions stop, or frenzy fire the wheels.

Nor this the worst. As nature's ties decay,
As duty, love, and honour fail to sway,
Fictitious bonds, the bonds of wealth and law,
Still gather strength, and force unwilling awe.
Hence all obedience bows to these alone,
And talent sinks, and merit weeps unknown:
Till time may come, when, stripped of all her charms,
The land of scholars and the nurse of arms,
Where noble stems transmit the patriot flame,
Where kings have toiled and poets wrote for fame,
One sink of level avarice shall lie,
And scholars, soldiers, kings, unhonoured die.

Yet think not, thus when Freedom's ills I state,
I mean to flatter kings, or court the great.
Ye powers of truth that bid my soul aspire,
Far from my bosom drive the low desire!
And thou, fair Freedom, taught alike to feel
The rabble's rage and tyrant's angry steel;
Thou transitory flower, alike undone
By proud contempt or favour's fostering sun,
Still may thy blooms the changeful clime endure!
I only would repress them to secure:
For just experience tells, in every soil,
That those who think must govern those that toil;
And all that Freedom's highest aims can reach

Is but to lay proportioned loads on each.
Hence, should one order disproportioned grow,
Its double weight must ruin all below.

O then how blind to all that truth requires,
Who think it freedom when a part aspires!
Calm is my soul, nor apt to rise in arms,
Except when fast-approaching danger warms;
But when contending chiefs blockade the throne,
Contracting regal power to stretch their own,
When I behold a factious band agree
To call it freedom when themselves are free;
Each wanton judge new penal statutes draw,
Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law,
The wealth of climes where savage nations roam,
Pillaged from slaves to purchase slaves at home;
Fear, pity, justice, indignation start,
Tear off reserve, and bare my swelling heart;
Till half a patriot, half a coward grown,
I fly from petty tyrants to the throne.

Yes, brother, curse with me that baleful hour
When first ambition struck at regal power;
And thus polluting honour in its source,
Gave wealth to sway the mind with double force.
Have we not seen, round Britain's peopled shore,
Her useful sons exchanged for useless ore,
Seen all her triumphs but destruction haste,
Like flaring tapers brightening as they waste?
Seen opulence, her grandeur to maintain,
Lead stern depopulation in her train,
And over fields where scattered hamlets rose
In barren solitary pomp repose?
Have we not seen at pleasure's lordly call
The smiling long-frequented village fall?

Beheld the duteous son, the sire decayed,
The modest matron, and the blushing maid,
Forced from their homes, a melancholy train,
To traverse climes beyond the western main;
Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,
And Niagara stuns with thundering sound?

Even now, perhaps, as there some pilgrim strays
Through tangled forests and through dangerous ways,
Where beasts with man divided empire claim,
And the brown Indian marks with murderous aim;
There, while above the giddy tempest flies,
And all around distressful yells arise,
The pensive exile, bending with his woe,
To stop too fearful, and too faint to go,
Casts a long look where England's glories shine,
And bids his bosom sympathize with mine.

Vain, very vain, my weary search to find
That bliss which only centres in the mind.
Why have I strayed from pleasure and repose,
To seek a good each government bestows?
In every government, though terrors reign,
Though tyrant kings or tyrant laws restrain,
How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!
Still to ourselves in every place consigned,
Our own felicity we make or find:
With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.
The lifted axe, the agonizing wheel,
Luke's iron crown, and Damiens' bed of steel,
To men remote from power but rarely known,
Leave reason, faith, and conscience all our own.

ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

INTRODUCTION TO GRAY'S ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

Birth and Early Education. Thomas Gray, the son of Philip Gray, an exchange broker and scrivener, was born in London, December 26, 1716. His father, a man of some wealth, was brutal and extravagant in temperament, and neglected and ill used his family. Gray owed him little, unless the musical element in his poetry; for Philip Gray, like the father of Milton, was a skilled musician. The young Gray was indebted for the care of his bringing up and for his support at school almost wholly to his mother, to whom he remained tenderly attached all his life. His mother's brother, Robert Antrobus, taught at Eton, and here the poet had his preparatory education, afterwards attending Cambridge. When his father refused to educate him, Gray's mother maintained him at school and in the university, supporting herself and her children — there were twelve in all, but none but Gray reached maturity — by engaging for many years in the millinery business with a sister. This was despite her husband's attempts to secure her earnings for his own purposes. Gray studied classical literature, history, and language, at Cambridge, but shunned the study of mathematics. Intending later to read law, he left the university in 1738, not yet having his degree, and the next year set out to tour France and Italy with his school friend, Horace Walpole, son of the prime minister and later a prominent if somewhat dilettante man of letters of the day. Gray remained abroad about two years, although not all of the time was passed with Walpole.

Life at Cambridge. Gray's father died in 1741, having wasted a large part of his fortune, and Gray returned in 1742, with but a small income of his own, to Cambridge, where he went into residence, giving up his earlier intention to read law. Here he was to spend in relative quiet and seclusion over thirty years of his life. After the death of his father, his mother and aunt disposed of their shop and went to live with a widowed sister, Mrs. Rogers, at the little village of Stoke Pogis, or Poges, in Buckinghamshire, about four miles north of the Thames, near Eton. The most picturesque feature of this village is the small church, built as early as the fourteenth century, which stands in a level, thickly-shaded churchyard dotted with graves. Gray passed most of his vacations at this village with his mother. At Cambridge he settled down to a life of reading and study, too weighed down by the menace of ill health to be very ambitious. He came, nevertheless, to be recognized as one of the most learned men of his time, and is still ranked among the most scholarly of our poets. The influence of his academic life is distinguishable in his verse. The subjects in which he was interested included history, classical literature, older English literature, modern literature, music, painting, architecture, philosophy, geography, zoölogy, botany, antiquities, heraldry, gardening. His chief recreation was travel. He visited the Scotch Highlands in 1765, and made a tour of the Lake country in 1769, anticipating Wordsworth in his enthusiasm for the region which the latter poet was to make classic.

There are but few external happenings to record of Gray's later life. His mother died in 1755 and was buried at Stoke Poges. In 1757 he was offered the poet-laureateship, but refused to accept the honor. In 1768 he was appointed professor of modern history at Cambridge, a position which he retained till his death, although he delivered no lectures, the latter being not always demanded of professors then. On July 24, 1771, while

at dinner in College Hall, he was seized with convulsions. He died six days later, on July 30, at the age of fifty-four.

Literary Work. Gray's literary work bulks very slight, considering his ability and the rank which he takes among English poets. He has left hardly more than 14,000 lines of poetry. These consist chiefly of the early odes, written about 1742, *On Spring* and *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, — the latter his first published piece, from which comes the familiar line, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise"; the *Elegy*, destined to become the mid-eighteenth century classic; and his two most ambitious pieces, the odes *The Progress of Poesie* and *The Bard*, published in 1757. In later life he began to translate and imitate the poetry of the Celts and the Norsemen. He was a delightful letter writer and diarist, his letters and journals being as charming as his poetry. They reveal the eclectic character of his interests, his learning, his sensitiveness to the various movements of his time, his keen love of the mediæval; and they give glimpses of his feeling for nature, as, for example, his enthusiasm for mountains and landscape. Outside Gray's journals little else of this temper is to be met with from men of letters until the next period, when the revolution in poetic taste foreshadowed by the *Elegy* and *The Deserted Village* is consummated.

Many attempts have been made to explain the scantiness of Gray's literary productiveness. One cause was undoubtedly his ennui of spirits due to prevailing ill health. Gray was a sufferer by paternal inheritance from the painful disease of the gout. His lack of physical health would account sufficiently of itself for his indolence as a writer; although there have been of course poets, like Pope, who managed to find abundant literary expression despite the burden of disease. It has been suggested also that Gray was overacademic to write freely or spontaneously. He was too studious, too fastidious, or too critical for the creative impulse to find free play in him. The two attitudes of mind, the

critical and the creative, are rarely compatible, and Gray's endowments of imagination and originality seem not to have been so strong as to break through into written expression at any cost.

Perhaps, however, the real explanation of Gray's literary inactivity is that suggested by Matthew Arnold.[1] Arnold believes that Gray was repressed by the spirit of his age; that he "never spoke out," for the reason that he was born out of date. He lived either too late or too early. The mid-eighteenth century was not a stimulating poetical period, and Gray's gifts and tastes were not those which the age of Dr. Johnson encouraged, or with which it was in sympathy. Had he been a contemporary of Milton, or yet of Burns, he might have come to his own; his poetical genius might have found, Arnold thinks, full expression.

Personal Traits. Gray was small of stature, with fine features, was careful in dress, and reserved in manner. Many letters which characterize him for us have been preserved by friends and biographers. Dr. Beattie, professor at the University of Aberdeen, with whom Gray was on familiar terms, writes to a friend:

> I am sorry you did not see Mr. Gray on his return; you would have been much pleased with him. Setting aside his merit as a poet, which, however, in my opinion, is greater than any of his contemporaries can boast, in this or any other nation; I found him possest of the most exact taste, the soundest judgment, and the most extensive learning. He is happy in a singular facility of expression. His conversation abounds in original observations, delivered with no appearance of sententious formality, and seeming to arise spontaneously, without study or premeditation. I passed two very agreeable days with him at Glammis, and found him as easy in his manners, and as communicative and frank, as I could have wished.[2]

[1] *Essays in Criticism.* Second series.

[2] *Life of Dr. Beattie*, II, 321. Cited by Mitford.

A minor contemporary poet, commenting on Dr. Johnson's not very successful *Life of Gray*, wrote:

If there is a writer who more than others has a claim to be exempted from his [Dr. Johnson's] petulance, Mr. Gray has that claim. His own polished manners restrained him from ever giving offence to any good man; his warm and cheerful benevolence endeared him to all his friends; though he lived long in a college, he lived not *sullenly* there, but in a liberal intercourse with the wisest and most virtuous men of his time. He was perhaps the most learned man of the age, but his mind never contracted the rust of pedantry. He had too good an understanding to neglect that urbanity which renders society pleasing: his conversation was instructing, elegant, and agreeable. Superior knowledge, an exquisite taste in the fine arts, and, above all, purity of morals, and an unaffected reverence for religion, made this excellent person an ornament to society, and an honour to human nature.[1]

Others call attention to his sense of humor, manifest in his speech and in his letters, and to his fondness for music. The most unfriendly of his critics could find nothing worse to suggest of him than that he was sometimes overreticent or abstracted, and sometimes perhaps overfastidious.

Composition of the "Elegy." The *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* was begun in 1742, and not finished until eight years later. It was published anonymously in 1750, and sprang at once into the favor which it has never lost. In two months it had gone into four editions. A note by Gray in one MS. of the poem cites fifteen authorized editions, and pirated editions innumerable. Professor Gosse[2] thinks that the beginning of the composition of the *Elegy* may date from the funeral of Gray's uncle, Jonathan Rogers, who died October 1, 1742. Others have thought that the beginning of the poem might date from the

[1] *Inquiry into Some Passages in Dr. Johnson's Lives of the Poets*, by R. Potter, 1783.

[2] *Life of Gray*, Chapter III.

death of Gray's college friend, Richard West, in 1742. Possibly the first dawn of some of the ideas of the poem may be detected in the closing lines of an *Alcaic Ode*, written in 1741, the best known and practically the last of Gray's Latin poems.[1] The final touches were given to the *Elegy* June 12, 1750, at Stoke Poges, where the poem had been begun. The death of Gray's aunt in 1749 seems to have brought the forgotten poem to his mind; and he took it in hand again. According to tradition, some stanzas were composed by the poet among the tombs at Granchester, about two miles from Cambridge, the great bell of St. Mary's perhaps suggesting the curfew of the poem. Undoubtedly the churchyard at Stoke Poges — where his aunt, later his mother, and then Gray himself was buried — has the better right to be considered the churchyard of the *Elegy*. It is so looked upon by the tourists from all countries, who to-day stroll among the trees and graves, recalling the lines of the poem, or who stand before the stone mausoleum erected to Gray's memory in 1789 and inscribed with his name.

In the early editions the *Elegy* is not printed in stanzas of four lines, but continuously, without stanzaic pauses. Although the consecutive lines of the printing made the divergence slightly less conspicuous at the time, probably the poet showed no little independence in departing from the heroic couplet, the standard verse form of the day, and employing the heroic quatrain, — that is, stanzas of four lines, in iambic pentameter, with alternating rhymes. The latter form was rarely employed when the *Elegy* appeared. The poet may have derived his use of this measure from Dryden's notable *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), which is written in this form, or from some minor contemporary piece.[2]

Historically the *Elegy* is to be grouped with the "literature of melancholy" deriving from Milton's *Il Penseroso*. Its great success fixed the quatrain henceforth as a standard elegy form,

[1] Gosse, *Life of Gray*, Chapter II. [2] Ibid., Chapter V.

and caused many translations and imitations of the poem to be made in foreign languages. One of the most notable of its derivatives is the French poet Lamartine's *Le Lac*. After Blair's success with *The Grave* (1745) and Gray's with the *Elegy*, "churchyard pieces" long remained the poetic vogue; note, for example, Philip Freneau's *The Indian Burying Ground* and *Eutaw Springs*, in early American literature; perhaps also, in some features, Bryant's *Thanatopsis*.

Popularity of the "Elegy." So well loved has Gray's poem proved to be, that although there are many other elegies of note in our language, not a few of them far more ambitious, Gray's is that first recalled by the majority of readers; indeed, it seems to have become practically "*The* Elegy" of our language. It is a poem of the contemplative class; and in its vague dejection and the moralizing tone of its reflections on life, death, and success, it has much in common with other poetry of the eighteenth century, prevailingly a period of poetry of moral didacticism. In other respects the *Elegy* diverges markedly from contemporary verse. Gray's poem is thoroughly humanized, fused with emotion, and the language in which it is expressed is not abstract but concrete. He takes the reader away from the prevailing themes of the life of the town and of society. He has democratic feeling, a strong sympathy with the narrow lot and the restricted opportunities of the rude forefathers of the hamlet, and his treatment shows sensitiveness to landscape and a delicate sympathy with nature. Aside from the universality of the sentiment, most readers of the *Elegy* find that it is the poet's personal introduction to his subject which appeals to them most strongly. In the opening stanzas he conveys perfectly the stillness of twilight and the English rural feeling, fixing just the right atmosphere of quiet, tinged with melancholy, for his gentle meditations. The poet's tone in reflection is temperate and just. The *Elegy* reveals little keen

personal sorrow. The author raises no questions and expresses no rebellion. His attitude is one of acceptance. He is even a little formal and dispassionate; so much so that Taine complains that his emotion is academical, his tears cold.[1] But most readers experience no doubt as to the reality of the feeling and the breadth of the appeal. Dr. Johnson was not an admirer of Gray, and his life of the latter is the weakest of his *Lives of the Poets;* but speaking of the *Elegy* he concedes that "The Churchyard abounds with images which find a mirrour in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo."

Another factor in the remarkable vitality of the poem is its felicity in expression. Gray wrought the *Elegy* with exquisite care, as he did all his poems. He testifies that he aimed at a style with "extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical."[2] The sound of the lines is as notable as the thought, and perhaps somewhat more original. At times, as was unavoidable for an eighteenth-century poet, he falls into a certain conventionality of phrasing, a fault to which Goldsmith, although writing later, was still more prone. In an age when the influence of Pope was so dominant, the wonder is, not that Gray lapsed occasionally into artificial phrasing, but that his work is so full as it is of phrasing which is fresh. In the main the language of the *Elegy* is almost perfect in its condensation and lucidity. The felicitous and rememberable quality of its diction and the sculpturesque perfection of its stately quatrains have helped to make phrases, lines, or even whole stanzas of the poem part of our daily speech.

[1] *History of English Literature*, Book III, Chapter IX.

[2] Letter to Mason, 1758.

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ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that, from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r,
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault,
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to extasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,
The little Tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbad: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhimes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of Fame and Elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies;
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries;
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tales relate;
If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

" Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
  Mutt'ring his wayward fancies would he rove;
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
  Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

" One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
  Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
  Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

" The next, with dirges due in sad array,
  Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.—
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
  Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth,
  A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown:
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
  And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
  Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
  He gain'd from Heaven ('t was all he wish'd) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
  Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
  The bosom of his Father and his God.

NOTES ON THE DESERTED VILLAGE

1. Auburn: Goldsmith obtained the name from his friend and fellow-member of the Literary Club, Bennet Langton (Forster's *Life*, II, 206). There is an Auburn in Wiltshire, but it is not Goldsmith's.

2. swain: a favorite word for young man, lover, or shepherd, in the set or conventional poetical phraseology of the eighteenth century. Goldsmith uses it here in the sense of rustic or countryman.

3. smiling spring: the first of the many personifications, of which the eighteenth century was especially fond, in the poem. Other and more typical examples are the personified abstractions, ll. 68, 81, 319, 321, 403, etc. But few of these (so *virtue*, l. 108; *folly*, l. 270; *Poetry*, l. 407; and two or three more) are capitalized in the original editions.

4. parting summer: departing. Cf. "parting day," Gray's *Elegy*; "parted from the jousts," Tennyson's *Lancelot and Elaine*, l. 618. "Depart" formerly meant separate. "Part" and "depart" have exchanged meanings.

5. bowers: Goldsmith was partial to this word. Cf. ll. 33, 37, 47, 86, 366.

10. cot: cottage (the older meaning of the word). Cf. "poure folke in cotes," Langland, *Piers Plowman*, C, x, 72; also Burns's *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. The word occurs often as a suffix in place-names: Charlcote, etc.

12. decent church: *decent* is used in its root sense of comely, becoming. Sir Walter Scott wrote of Lissoy (*Miscellaneous Prose Works*, 1834, III, 250):

> The church which tops the neighboring hill, the mill, and the brook, are still pointed out; and a hawthorn has suffered the penalty of poetical celebrity, being cut to pieces by those admirers of the bard who desired to have classical tooth-pick cases and tobacco stoppers. Much of this supposed locality may be fanciful; but it is a pleasing testimony to the poet in the land of his fathers.

Cf. also the account of Dr. Strean, who was Henry Goldsmith's successor as curate of Kilkenny West, near Lissoy (Forster's *Life*, II, 207).

14. talking age: other instances of Goldsmith's use of an abstract for a concrete noun, as *talking age* for "talking old folks," occur, ll. 248, 303, 304, 321, etc.

15. According to his friend Cook, ll. 5–15 were Goldsmith's second morning's work on the poem (cf. Introduction, p. xxi); but probably this statement should not be understood too literally.

17. train: another favorite word with Goldsmith, especially as a rhyme word. Cf. ll. 63, 81, 135, 149, 252, 320, 337. In many of these cases he uses the word with rather vague significance.

18. Led up: arranged, brought in order.

20. contending: Goldsmith liked this absolute use of the present participle. Cf. ll. 108, 111, 297, and note on l. 79.

22. sleights of art: feats of dexterity. Cf. "magic sleights," *Macbeth*, III, v, 26; "sleight-of-hand," etc.

25. simply: artlessly.

29. virgin: a favorite word for girl or maiden in eighteenth century poetic diction, as *swain* for man, and *matron* for married woman.

35. lawn: not a sweep of cultivated grass, as now, but an open grassy stretch of country, a plain. Cf. the use of the word by Milton, Dryden, and Pope.

37. tyrant: some wealthy landowner. The idea of the inclosure of the domain and the eviction of the tenants was perhaps suggested to Goldsmith by something of the kind in the neighborhood of Lissoy, when a certain General Napier, returning enriched from Spain, turned his tenants out of their farms that he might inclose the land as his own private domain. Cf. the testimony of Dr. Strean (Forster's *Life*, II, p. 207). There were contemporary evictions enough in England, however, some of which Goldsmith saw; and the suggestion might easily have come from these.

39. One only master: poetic for one single master.

42. Note the alliteration in this line.

44. bittern: perhaps an echo of Isaiah xiv. 23. Cf. also Thomson's *Seasons*, Spring, ll. 21–23. In his *History of Animated Nature*, VI, p. 2, Goldsmith writes of the bittern, a bird of the heron family:

> Those who walked in an evening by the sedgy sides of unfrequented rivers must remember a variety of notes from different waterfowl: the loud scream of the wild goose, the croaking of the mallard, the whining of the lapwing, and the tremulous neighing of the jacksnipe. But of all those sounds there is none so

dismally hollow as the booming of the bittern. It is impossible for words to give those who have not heard this evening-call an adequate idea of its solemnity. It is like the interrupted bellowing of a bull, but hollower and louder, and is heard at a mile's distance, as if issuing from some formidable being that resided at the bottom of its waters.

I remember in the place where I was a boy with what terror this bird's note affected the whole village; they considered it as the presage of some sad event, and generally found or made one to succeed it.

45. lapwing: sometimes called the pewit, from its cry.

51. Ill . . . ills: an awkward repetition, rather surprising in so careful a polisher of his lines as Goldsmith.

52. decay: decrease in numbers.

54. breath, etc.: Prior points out as a possible source for this a line by the French poet, De Caux:

Un souffle peut détruire et (qu')un souffle a produit.

Cf. also the sentiment in Burns's *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, l. 165.

55. bold peasantry: the small farmer or yeomanry class, which for centuries had held an honored position in English history. The rapid decline of this sturdy body in the eighteenth century, due to various causes, was thought to weaken the country greatly. Goldsmith was not alone in regretting their remarkable diminution. Cf. Gibbins's *Industry in England*, 276–279.

57. England's griefs: the poet would have found some trouble in fixing the date when "England's griefs began"; his specific reference here, however, is to the conditions described, ll. 57–62. This paragraph is often pointed out as another instance of the fondness of the poets to look back on good old days, the "golden age" myth, which dated from classical times.

63. trade's unfeeling train: the phrase should be noted as significant of Goldsmith's peculiar views with regard to the influence of trade or commerce. Cf. Introduction, p. xxii.

67. opulence: the first edition, altered in the third, read, "to *luxury* allied."

69. These . . . hours: *These* is the reading of the fifth edition. Most modern editions read, "*Those* gentle hours," etc.

74. manners: the word is equivalent to customs here.

75. parent, etc.: a rather strained figure.

76. confess: give evidence of.

77–80. These lines read in the first, second, and third editions:

> Here, as with doubtful, pensive steps I range,
> Trace every scene, and wonder at the change,
> Remembrance, etc.

79. elapsed, etc.: for other cases of the absolute use of the past participle, of which Goldsmith was very fond, cf. ll. 95, 157, 181, 393. Cf. also note on l. 20. — **return to view**: in reality Goldsmith never returned to his boyhood home or to Ireland after 1752.

86. lay me down: prose diction would employ the reflexive "myself" instead of the personal pronoun. Similar expressions, preserving or imitating archaic constructions, are "sat him down," "I doubt me," "get thee away," etc.

87–88. In the first, second, and third edition, these lines read:

> My anxious day to husband near the close,
> And keep life's flame from wasting by repose.

The alteration improved the figure.

93. as an hare: the first of the many formal similes of the poem. Cf. ll. 167–170, 189–192, 287–302, 427–430. For Goldsmith's views with regard to poetic figures, cf. (if it be his) the "Essay on the Use of Metaphors," reprinted under "Unacknowledged Essays," in Cunningham's edition, Vol. III. Present usage would write "which" for "whom" and "a" instead of "an" hare. Cf. the rule in grammars. Goldsmith likes to use *an* under such conditions. Cf. l. 268.

96. return, etc.: it was Goldsmith's own wish to return to his native village to die. Cf. *The Citizen of the World*, Letter CIII:

> Whatever vicissitudes we experience in life, however we toil, or wheresoever we wander, our fatigued wishes still recur to home for tranquillity: we long to die in that spot which gave us birth, and in that pleasing expectation opiate every calamity.

98. never must be mine: destined never to be mine.

99. happy: the first edition, altered in the third, read, "How *blest* is he," etc. Compare the thought in the essay in *The Bee* on "Happiness in a great measure dependent on Constitution":

> . . . by struggling with misfortunes, we are sure to receive some wounds in the conflict. The only method to come off victorious is by running away.

104. tempt . . . the deep: make trial of the deep. A Latinism. Cf. Vergil, *Eclogues*, IV, 32, "temptare Thetim ratibus" (Rolfe).

105. guilty state: a pomp that, under the circumstances, is criminal.

106. famine, etc.: note the number of abstract nouns personified in this passage. Cf. note on l. 3.

107. latter end: death. A biblical expression. Cf. Job viii. 7; Proverbs xix. 20. Since the sixteenth century, *latter* has been used in a number of stock phrases, as here, as a superlative.

109. Bends: the first edition, altered in the third, read, "*Sinks* to the grave," etc. — **unperceived decay**: a line suggested very likely by l. 293 of Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, which contains the same phrase (Dobson).

110. resignation: Sir Joshua Reynolds derived the name of his painting "Resignation" from this passage. He dedicated an engraving of the painting to Goldsmith in the following terms: "This attempt to express a character in *The Deserted Village* is dedicated to Dr. Goldsmith by his sincere friend and admirer, Joshua Reynolds."

115. careless: care free.

118. to meet: ordinary diction would employ the preposition and the verbal noun rather than the gerund. For other examples of this construction, which is probably a Latinism, cf. ll. 145, 148, 161, 288.

121. whispering: other onomatopoetic words in this passage are *murmur*, l. 114, and *gabbled*, l. 119. Essay XVIII among the "Unacknowledged Essays" printed by Cunningham, Vol. III, contains a special passage on such words, of which a good deal was made in Goldsmith's day. Cf. also the famous lines in Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, 365 ff.

122. vacant mind: the mind free from care or seriousness; or possibly the reference is to the loud meaningless laugh of some village idiot.

124. nightingale: in reality the nightingale is not found in Ireland (Rolfe). In his *Animated Nature* Goldsmith says of the nightingale (Cunningham, IV, 420):

> Her note is soft, various, and interrupted; she seldom holds it without a pause above the time that one could count twenty. The nightingale's pausing song would be the proper epithet for this bird's music with us, which is more pleasing than the warbling of any other bird, because it is heard at a time when the rest are silent.

126. fluctuate in the gale: often pointed out as a line exactly in the stereotyped manner of Pope and his followers. The essay cited (note on l. 121) contains a passage commenting on the metaphorical expressiveness of *fluctuate*, and citing examples of its effective use.

128. bloomy: not a very common word. For another instance of its use, cf. Milton, *Sonnet to a Nightingale.*

130. plashy: abounding in plashes or puddles. Used by Wordsworth in *The Excursion*, Bk. VIII. Both *bloomy* and *plashy* sound somewhat strange in Goldsmith's conservative vocabulary, though they would not in poetry of another period.

131. matron: cf. note on l. 29. According to Dr. Strean (Forster's *Life*, II, 207), the poor widow was one Catherine Giraghty:

> To this day (1807), the brook and ditches near the spot where her cabin stood abound with cresses . . . and her children live in the neighborhood.

140. village preacher: the famous portrait of the village preacher should be compared with the earlier and parallel portraits of Chaucer and Dryden. Cf. Appendix. The picture seems to have been taken in part from recollections of the poet's brother Henry, to whom *The Traveller* was dedicated, and who died just before *The Deserted Village* was written. The natures of father and son seem to have been similar, and the son, like the father, was a humble curate on small salary. A few critics suggest that traits of Goldsmith's uncle, Thomas Contarine, may also be embodied. So Dobson, *Life*, p. 187.—**mansion**: used in its root sense of abode, dwelling place.

142. passing: surpassingly. Since the fifteenth century a favorite intensive adverb with poets and romancers. Cf. "A faire lady, and a passynge wyse," *Morte Darthur*, I, 7.

145. Unpractised: the first edition, altered in the fifth, read, "*Unskilful* he," etc. For the following of the participle or adjective by the infinitive, cf. note on l. 118.

148. More skilled: the first edition, altered in the fifth, read, "More *bent.*"

149–162. The proverbial Irish hospitality, one of Goldsmith's own traits.

155. broken soldier: some of these traits were probably suggested by Goldsmith's old teacher, who was an ex-soldier. Cf. note on l. 196.—**bade**: the usual past participle of "bid" is "bidden." Many editors read "bid" here.

161. scan: cf. note on l. 118.

170. led the way: compare the last couplet in Chaucer's portrait of the poor parson. Cf. Appendix.

172. dismayed: filled the dying man with foreboding.

182. steady zeal: the first edition read, "With *ready* zeal."

189–192. Goldsmith gives this simile, perhaps the most celebrated passage of the poem, as a separate complete sentence, although there is no main predicate. Compare the construction in the simile, ll. 287 ff.

194. blossomed: written *blossom'd* in the original editions. Goldsmith generally writes out the *-ed* of his participles — which is the usage in the present edition — or substitutes *-t* after voiceless consonants, as *topt*, l. 12, *deckt*, l. 320. He writes *'d* in about half a dozen cases only.

196. village master: the original of this picture was probably Thomas or "Paddy" Byrne, an ex-soldier, who was Goldsmith's teacher at Lissoy. Cf. Introduction, p. xiii.

205–206. aught . . . fault: French *faute*. The *l* was arbitrarily inserted in the sixteenth century, when the connection of the word with the Latin *fallere* was realized, and eventually it came to be pronounced. In *Edwin and Angelina*, Goldsmith rhymes "fault" with "sought," in *Retaliation* with "caught." So generally in the poetry of the period. Cf. Emerson, *History of the English Language*, § 191.

207. village: villagers. The abstract instead of the agent noun.

209. terms and tides: *terms* were periods when courts were assembled by justices; *tides* were ecclesiastical times or seasons, as Whitsuntide.

210. gauge: measure the contents of barrels. Excisemen were popularly called "gaugers." Cf. Burns, who was for a while inspector of liquor customs, or Kennedy in Scott's novel, *Guy Mannering*.

213. learned length, etc.: to most readers this line suggests the manner of Goldsmith's friend, Dr. Johnson, author of the Dictionary, who was noted for his rather ponderous and erudite vocabulary and his blustering speech.

217–218. spot . . . triumphed: the inn, the scene of some of Goldsmith's own triumphs. In the years when he was ostensibly preparing for the ministry, Goldsmith presided at the convivial meetings held nightly at the inn at Ballymahon, where his mother lived after the death of his father. "Here he was a triton among the minnows, the delight of horse-doctors and bagmen, and the idol of his former college associate" (Dobson's *Life*, p. 22).

221. nut-brown: a familiar epithet to Goldsmith's readers. Cf. the ballad of the *Nut-Brown Maid*, and Milton's "nut-brown ale," *L'Allegro*, l. 100.

227–236. An interesting first draught of the descriptive passage that follows is preserved in a letter written by Goldsmith to his brother in 1759. He sent it as a specimen of the manner of a "heroi-comical" poem he had in mind, the hero of which he intended to introduce in an alehouse. The passage appears again, slightly modified, in Letter XXX of *The Citizen of the World*, in which it figures as a description of an author's bedchamber. The latter passage runs:

> A window patch'd with paper lent a ray,
> That dimly show'd the state in which he lay:
> The sanded floor that grits beneath the tread;
> The humid wall with paltry pictures spread;
> The royal game of goose was there in view,
> And the twelve rules the royal martyr drew;
> The seasons fram'd with listing found a place,
> And brave Prince William show'd his lamp-black face:
> The morn was cold: he views with keen desire
> The rusty grate, unconscious of a fire;
> With beer and milk arrears the frieze was scored,
> And five crack'd teacups dress'd the chimney-board.

228. clock . . . clicked: the mimetic quality of this line should be noted. Cf. note on l. 121.

229. contrived: the participle.

231. use: the pictures probably covered defects in the wall.

232. twelve good rules: the composition of these rules was ascribed to Charles I, and they were hung up in most public houses of the time. Cf. Crabbe's line in *The Parish Register*, Part I:

> There is King Charles and all his glorious rules
> Who proved Misfortune's was the best of schools.

The twelve rules were, according to Hale's *Longer English Poems*, p. 353:

1. Urge no healths. 2. Profane no divine ordinances. 3. Touch no state matters. 4. Reveal no secrets. 5. Pick no quarrels. 6. Make no companions. 7. Maintain no ill opinions. 8. Keep no bad company. 9. Encourage no vice. 10. Make no long meals. 11. Repeat no grievances. 12. Lay no wagers.

— **game of goose**: not the ordinary game of fox and geese, but a more complex game played with dice on a board on which a goose was pictured at intervals. Cf. Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes*, IV, ii. The game is mentioned by Scott, *Waverley*, Chapter III.

236. chimney: fireplace.

243. The farmer knew the news because of his visits to markets; the barber's loquacity is proverbial.

244. woodman: a hunter or forester.

248. mantling bliss: foaming ale. The eighteenth century liked such use of the abstract for the concrete. Cf. *innocence*, l. 328; also note on l. 14.

253. congenial: supply *more* from the preceding.

257. vacant: care free.

258. This line recalls *Hamlet*, I, v, 77; or, better, Scott's "Unwept, unhonored, and unsung," *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, VI. Rolfe cites also *Paradise Lost*, II, 185; V, 899; *Merchant of Venice*, III, ii, 159; and Byron, *Childe Harold*, IV, 179, "unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown."

268. an happy: cf. note on l. 93. The thought of this passage was treated in fuller form by Goldsmith in Letter XXV of *The Citizen of the World*, on "The Natural Rise and Decline of Kingdoms," etc. The last sentences of the essay are:

> Happy, very happy, might they have been had they known when to bound their riches and their glory; had they known that extending empire is often diminishing power . . .; that too much commerce may injure a nation as well as too little; and that there is a wide difference between a conquering and a flourishing empire.

269. freighted ore: cf. *The Traveller*, l. 398. The poet seems to mean that the country is bartering for foreign luxuries what is really needed for home consumption. Thus while more money comes into the country, it serves only to enhance the luxury of the rich, bringing loss rather than increase in the substantial products of the country.

287. female: much used instead of "woman" in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Cf. the novels of Miss Burney (1752–1840), of Godwin (1756–1836), or of Cooper in America.

288. Secure to please: confident of pleasing. A Latinism. Cf. note on l. 118.

293. solicitous to bless: anxious for success in her effort to charm.

297. verging to decline: cf. note on l. 20.

304. contiguous pride: cf. note on l. 14.

308. bare-worn common: cf. Introduction, pp. x, xi.

313. those joys: the first edition, altered in the third, read, "To see *each* joy."

316. artist: artisan or mechanic.

317. long-drawn: perhaps a verbal reminiscence of Gray's *Elegy*, l. 32.

318. black gibbet: in 1758, when Goldsmith took up his residence in Green Arbour Court, he was very near the Old Bailey Sessions House, where all prisoners taken within ten miles of London were tried, and where they were publicly executed when condemned. Near by also was the famous Newgate Prison. In a period when stealing, forgery, and even lesser crimes were punishable by death, the number of executions was very great, and the gallows a common object in the landscape.

319. dome: house. Latin *domus*. Cf. *The Traveller*, l. 159.

322. chariot: a favorite word in eighteenth century poetry for a carriage of pleasure or of state. — **torches**: these were carried before the foot traveler by linkboys. They were very necessary even at a later period, because of the unpaved, badly lighted streets.

326. houseless . . . female: cf. note on l. 287. Lines 326–336 should be compared to the analogous passage in *The Bee*, "A City Night Piece," reprinted as Letter CXVII in *The Citizen of the World:*

> But who are these who make the streets their couch, and find a short repose from wretchedness at the doors of the opulent? . . . These poor shivering females have once seen happier days and been flattered into beauty. . . . Perhaps, now lying at the doors of their betrayers, they sue to wretches whose hearts are insensible, or debauchees who may curse but will not relieve them. Why, why was I born a man, and yet see the sufferings of wretches I cannot relieve?

Goldsmith himself was very charitable to houseless wanderers. When he died, "On the stairs of his apartment there was the lamentation of the old and infirm, and the sobbing of women; poor objects of his charity, to whom he had never turned a deaf ear, even when struggling himself with poverty" (Irving's *Life*, Chapter XLIV).

328. innocence distrest: the abstract for the concrete. Cf. notes on l. 14 and l. 248.

330. The sensitiveness to beauty in flowers shown in the simile in this line links Goldsmith forward with the next generation of poets.

338. participate her pain: another phrase exactly in the eighteenth century manner.

344. Altama: properly the Altamaha (pronounced with accent on the last syllable), a river in Georgia. The latter was much heard of in Goldsmith's day through the colony of Georgia, for which the poet's friend, General Oglethorpe, had secured letters patent in 1732. The colony was started as an asylum for the oppressed, and was prospering

when Goldsmith wrote. The charter is reprinted in *A Narrative of the Colony of Georgia in America*, by P. Tailfer and Others, London, 1741; or in *American Colonial Tracts*, G. P. Humphrey, Rochester, New York, No. 2, 1897. One sentence reads: "And his Majesty farther grants all his lands between the rivers Savannah and Alatamaha."

The more or less conventional new-world description (ll. 343–358) is a good picture of a tropical scene, but it is more like South America than like Georgia. Thomson, whose *Liberty* Goldsmith often quotes, gives (V, 638–646) a much brighter picture of the Georgia colony.

355. tigers: there are no tigers in Georgia. The jaguar and the puma are the American tigers (Rolfe).

359–362. Here begins another of the strong contrasts of the poem. Dr. Tupper points out that a similar contrast between tropical scenes and the peaceful lawns of England is found in Thomson's *Liberty*, V, 32 ff.

363. parting: cf. note on l. 4.

378. a father's: the first edition, altered in the fourth, read, "*her* father's."

380. cot: cf. note on l. 10.

384. silent manliness: the first edition, altered in the fourth, read, "in all the *decent* manliness." Dr. Tupper notes that De Foe has the same idea in his *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722): "He mourned heartily, as it was easy to see, but with a kind of masculine grief that could not give itself vent by tears."

386. things like these: referring to the simplicity and happiness of country life, one of the main themes of the poem. It may be noted that Burns expresses a sentiment parallel with that of ll. 85–94 in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, ll. 176–180.

392. bloated mass, etc.: for the origin of this metaphor, cf. *The Citizen of the World*, Letter XXV:

> . . . they still, however, preserved the insolence of wealth without a power to support it, and persevered in being luxurious while contemptible from poverty. In short the state resembled one of those bodies bloated with disease, whose bulk is only a symptom of its wretchedness.

399. anchoring: lying at anchor.

402. shore . . . strand: the poet seems to make a distinction, meaning by strand the fringe of shore immediately next the sea.

409. degenerate times: this was not, in truth, a fertile period in English poetry. Cf. Introduction, p. xi.

412. solitary pride: my pride when alone. Goldsmith liked to write verse, but complained that he did not find it profitable. Cf. Introduction, p. xxii. He wrote to his brother in 1759:

Poetry is a much easier and more agreeable species of composition than prose, and could a man live by it, it were no unpleasant employment to be a poet.

418. Torno: the river Tornea or Torneo, between northern Sweden and Russia, flows into the Gulf of Bothnia. Goldsmith is referring to this rather than to Lake Tornea in northern Sweden. *Le Curieux Antiquaire, ou Recueil, Geographique et Histoirique*, par P. L. Berkenmeyer, Leyden, 1729, probably the *Geographie Curieuse* to which Goldsmith referred Reverend J. Granger for the solution of "Luke's iron crown," *The Traveller*, l. 436 (see Granger's *Letters*, 1805, p. 52), says (Chapter XIX, p. 594) concerning Torneo: "Torne, Torna, petite ville de la Bothnie, sur le bord Septentrional du Golfe de ce nom, à l'embouchure de la Torne . . ." It is more likely, however, that the name was suggested to Goldsmith by the operations of the French philosopher, M. de Maupertuis, in the Arctic regions. See his book, *The Figure of the Earth, determined from Observations, made by Order of the French King at the Polar Circle*, London, 1738. Tornea is often mentioned throughout the book, as in the table of contents, — "Observations of Arcturus, and of the Pole star, at Tornea," "Height of the Pole at Tornea," etc. — **Pambamarca**: one of the summits of the Andes near Quito in Ecuador. It is not entered in ordinary geographies. Goldsmith seems to select Tornea and Pambamarca as extremes, representing the Arctic and the equatorial regions. Undoubtedly he derived the suggestion of the name from *A Voyage to South America*, by Don George Juan and Don Antonio de Ulloa, trans., London, 1760. Cf. "Eastward it [the plain] is defended by the lofty Cordillera of Guamani and Pambamarca, and westward by that of Pinchincha" (p. 219). See also p. 229. Later in the book is described a signal erected on Pambamarca.

419. equinoctial fervours: torrid or equatorial heat. Another phrase in the characteristic eighteenth century poetic manner. Day and night are of about equal length when the sun crosses the equator, i.e. about March 21 and September 23.

422. Redress: make amends for.

425. of: construed with *possest*.

428. laboured mole: a pier or breakwater. The last four lines of the poem, as Boswell tells us, were written by Dr. Johnson (Boswell's *Life*, Chapter XV). They are in a stiffer manner than Goldsmith's.

NOTES ON THE TRAVELLER

A Prospect of Society, an early draft of *The Traveller*, was discovered by Bertram Dobell (1842–1914), the London bookseller, when he was looking over a package of pamphlets he had purchased. Mr. Dobell printed this early draft, which comprises 310 lines, together with the first edition of *The Traveller*, comprising 416 lines, in 1902. The number of lines in the ninth edition, the last published in the author's lifetime, was 438. The order of the passages in Mr. Dobell's early version is strangely confused and inconsecutive, and it remained for Mr. A. T. Quiller-Couch, in a review in the *Daily News* of March 31, to point out that the disorder is due to the fact that *The Prospect of Society* printed *The Traveller* backwards in fairly regular sections. Mr. Quiller-Couch's explanation may be cited in his own words:

> As Goldsmith finished writing out each page of his poem for press he laid it aside, on top of the page preceding — as I am doing with the pages of this causerie; and, when all was done, he forgot — as I hope I shall not forget — to sort back the pages in reverse order. That is all; given a good stolid compositor with no desire but to do his duty with the manuscript as it reached him, you have — what Mr. Dobell has recovered — an immortal poem printed wrong end foremost page by page. And I call the blunder delightful, and, when you come to think of it, just the blunder so natural to Goldsmith as to be almost postulable.

DEDICATION

The bond between Goldsmith and his brother seems always to have been very close (cf. note on *The Deserted Village*, l. 140). It was characteristic of Goldsmith, though not the part of worldly wisdom, for him to dedicate his poem to his brother, to whom he felt deeply attached. Others would have conformed to the usual practice of the time and selected some wealthy patron, in hope of reward of money or preferment.

Sir: such formality was customary between near relatives in the eighteenth century.

forty pounds a year: cf. *The Deserted Village*, l. 142.

pursues poetical fame: cf. *The Deserted Village*, ll. 407–414, and note.

In the first edition the second paragraph read as follows:

I now perceive, my dear brother, the wisdom of your humble choice. You have entered upon a sacred office where the harvest is great, and the laborers are but few; while you have left the field of Ambition, where the laborers are many, and the harvest not worth carrying away. But of all kinds of ambition, as things are now circumstanced, perhaps that which pursues poetical fame is the wildest. What from the increased refinement of the times, from the diversity of judgments produced by opposing systems of criticism, and from the more prevalent divisions of opinion influenced by party, the strongest and happiest efforts can expect to please but in a very narrow circle. Though the poet were as sure of his aim as the imperial archer of antiquity, who boasted that he never missed the heart; yet would many of his shafts now fly at random, for the heart is too often in the wrong place.

blank verse: a few poems in Goldsmith's day varied from the heroic couplets of reigning vogue, and blank verse was soon to regain popularity. But Goldsmith was no admirer of it. In his *Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning* (Chapter IX) he speaks of it as "a deviation from common sense."

Pindaric ode: this lyric form, an imitation, or pseudo-imitation, of the Greek odes of Pindar, had an interesting history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

alliterative care: Goldsmith uses alliteration occasionally (as in l. 416), but does not go out of his way to produce it.

half-witted thing: the reference seems to be to Charles Churchill, whose satirical verses, dealing with contemporary people and happenings, brought him great but short-lived popularity.

THE TRAVELLER

1. slow: Boswell, the biographer of Dr. Samuel Johnson, tells that Anthony Chamier, a member of the Literary Club, and undersecretary of Ireland, once asked Goldsmith what he meant by *slow* in this line. Did he mean tardiness of locomotion? Goldsmith, who, according to Boswell, "would say something without consideration," answered "yes." At this Johnson said, "No, sir: you do not mean tardiness of locomotion. You mean that sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude." Chamier believed then, said Johnson, "that I had written the line, as much as if he had seen me write it." Of the lines which Johnson really did contribute, however, this was not one. Cf. note on l. 420.

Slow is an especially effective word, in that it may have either meaning for the reader, or both. Slowness of movement indicates depression

of spirits, as briskness of movement indicates exhilaration. The line is telling, since it well strikes, at the opening, the personal note of regret and longing dominant in the whole. The poet is a wanderer in a strange land and feels his isolation.

2. or . . . or: either . . . or; an old usage, now poetical only. — **lazy Scheldt**: the Scheldt (pronounced *skelt*) is a sluggish river flowing through France, Belgium, and the Netherlands to the North Sea. — **wandering Po**: the Po rises in the Alps, flows southward through northern Italy, and empties by many mouths into the Adriatic.

3. Carinthian boor: Goldsmith visited Carinthia, a Province in southern Austria east of the Tirol, in 1755. His editor, Cunningham, wrote in 1853, "Carinthia still retains its character for inhospitality." Goldsmith was once turned out of a house there, when he had sought a night's shelter, according to his biographer Prior.

5. Campania: the Campagna, or undulating plain surrounding Rome; not the province Campania of south-central Italy. The Campagna is still an unhealthy region, and in Goldsmith's day was especially deserted and desolate.

6. expanding: *expanded* in early editions.

7–10. Goldsmith's testimonies to his attachment to his brother, and to his feeling of homesickness, are many. Cf. *A Citizen of the World*, Letter III, where he uses the same metaphor: "By every remove I only drag a greater length of chain"; also *Letter to Henry Goldsmith*, in 1759. Cf. also note on l. 140 in *The Deserted Village*.

13. guests: not the guests of *The Deserted Village*, ll. 149, 159, but the inmates of the household.

15. repair: betake themselves. Want and pain are personified abstractions, in the manner well liked in the eighteenth century.

17. In the first edition:

> Blest be those feasts where mirth and peace abound.

22. This is the picture of generous hospitality so often drawn by Goldsmith. Cf. *The Deserted Village*, ll. 142–162; also *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Chapters I, VI.

23. me: object of *leads*, l. 29.

24. The prose order would be "spent in wandering and care."

27. Cf. "A Letter from a Traveller," *The Bee:* "When will my restless disposition give me leave to enjoy the present hour? When at Lyons, I thought all happiness lay beyond the Alps; when in Italy, I found myself still in want of something and expected to leave solitude

behind me by going into Roumelia; and now you find me turning back, still expecting ease everywhere but where I am."

The same metaphor is used in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Chapter XXIX, "Death, the only friend of the wretched, for a little while mocks the weary traveller with the view, and like his horizon still flies before him."

30. And find: *to* before the infinitive omitted.

31–36. Some peak of the Alps, below which Italy, Switzerland, and France extend into the distance, inducing imaginative reflection.

32. sit me down: archaic reflexive use of personal pronoun.

33. Cf. *The Deserted Village*, ll. 189–192.

34. an: cf. notes on *The Deserted Village*, ll. 93 and 268.

36. humbler pride: cf. note on l. 256.

38. The first edition read:

> When thus Creation's charms around combine,
> Amidst the store, 't were thankless to repine,
> 'T were affectation all and school-taught pride,
> To spurn the splendid things by heaven supply'd.

41. school-taught pride: pride such as that taught in the school of the Stoic philosophers, who advocated nonsurrender to the feelings and the acceptance of all things with passive resignation.

42. These little things: those which "make each humble bosom vain."

45. ye glittering towns: apostrophe of this type, emphasized by parallelism, was much liked in eighteenth-century poetry. Cf. *The Deserted Village*, ll. 1–34, 75–82, 385–394, 407, etc.

48. swains: rustics or peasants. Cf. note on *The Deserted Village*, l. 2. — **dress:** till, cultivate.

50. heir: in full, "Inasmuch as I am Creation's heir." One early edition read, "Creation's tenant, all the world is mine."

57. prevails: gets the mastery. — **sorrows:** signs of sorrows, i.e. tears.

60. consigned: assigned, dedicated.

63. to find: dependent on *direct*, l. 64.

69. line: old term for *equator*, as in *The Ancient Mariner*.

70. golden sands: some think that Goldsmith had the Gold Coast in mind. — **palmy:** made from the sap of various kinds of palms.

75. If: the first edition reads:

> And yet perhaps, if states with states we scan,
> Or estimate their bliss on Reason's plan,
> Though patriots flatter and though fools contend,
> We still shall find uncertainty suspend;

Find that each good by Art or Nature given,
To these or those, but makes the balance even;
Find that the bliss of all is much the same,
And patriotic boasting reason's shame.

79–80. given . . . even: not an exact rhyme, but legitimatized by tradition.

84. Idra: Idria is a mountain town in the Austrian province of Carniola. Goldsmith refers to its famous quicksilver mines in his *Animated Nature*, where he uses the spelling *Idra*. Though the region is sterile, yet the mines afford the peasants a living. — **Arno**: a river in Tuscany, an especially fertile region of Italy. Pisa and Florence are on the Arno.

Lines 83 and 84 do not occur in the first edition.

85. The first edition read:

And though rough rocks or gloomy summits frown.

86. custom: use, habit.

87. The contrast is between art and nature, human skill as against natural fertility.

88. commerce: the first edition had *splendours*.

90. either: used here of five blessings instead of two.

91–92. These lines are omitted in the first and in some later editions. The idea presented in ll. 91 ff. is prominent in *The Deserted Village*.

98. peculiar pain: pain peculiar to itself.

99. try: *view* in the first edition. The meaning here is "examine."

100. prospect: the poet's vantage point is an Alpine height.

101. my proper: my own personal cares, as against those of mankind.

106–164. Dr. Frederick Tupper has pointed out that Goldsmith may have been influenced in this passage by Addison's *Letter from Italy* (1701).

105. Apennine: the plural is more customary. *The Apennines* is the general name for the great mountain ranges of Italy, which fall into several groups.

109. between: adverb.

112. were: the present tense would be more natural.

118. vernal lives: lives as short as spring. *Vernal* was a stock adjective in the eighteenth century.

121. gelid: cool; another favorite eighteenth-century adjective, Cf. "gelid cistern," "gelid founts," "gelid sighs," etc., in Thomson and other poets.

122. To winnow fragrance: to waft or diffuse it.

125. florid: flowery.

127. manners: customs or habits.

129. An Englishman's judgment. The passage seems more striking for its antithesis than for its historic truth. — **zealous**: has reference to religion.

134. commerce: in the fifteenth century the Italian cities Venice, Genoa, Florence, Pisa were commercial leaders of Europe. The dying out of Italian commerce was due to the rise of Spanish and Portuguese maritime enterprise.

142. unmanned: without inhabitants.

143. skill: knowledge.

144. plethoric: now often accented initially. The use of this medical word is due probably to Goldsmith's preparation as a physician. Cf. the passage from *The Citizen of the World*, quoted in note on *The Deserted Village*, l. 392. Cf. also *The Deserted Village*, ll. 389–394.

147. long-fallen: the reference is to Roman greatness and prosperity. The inhabitants have given up their high aspirations.

150. pasteboard triumph: in the fourth chapter of the *Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning*, Goldsmith tells of the fondness of the Italians for processions and cavalcades.

151–152. love . . . grove: another inexact rhyme, in accepted traditional usage.

153–154. Goldsmith's biographer Forster tells the following anecdote concerning the composition of these lines: "Sir Joshua Reynolds went out to call on Goldsmith, he says, not having seen him for some time, and, no one answering at his door, he opened it without announcement and walked in. His friend was at his desk with hand uplifted, and a look directed to another part of the room, where a little dog sat with difficulty on his haunches, looking imploringly at its teacher, whose rebuke for toppling over he had evidently just received. Reynolds advanced and looked past Goldsmith's shoulder at the writing on his desk. It seemed to be some portions of a poem, and, looking more closely, he was able to read a couplet which had been that instant written. The ink of the second line was wet.

> By sports like these are all their cares beguiled;
> The sports of children satisfy the child."

Lines 154 and 155 suffered several changes in early editions.

159. domes: palaces. — **Cæsars**: Roman emperors.

163. pile: edifice.

165–174. Contrast with the eighteenth-century attitude toward mountain scenery reflected here that of early nineteenth-century poets like Wordsworth and Byron.

170. the soldier and his sword: the Swiss were in demand as mercenary soldiers from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, especially in Italy and France. In *Hamlet* the king's guard are called Switzers.

173. zephyr: a mild west wind.

176. Redress: compensate for, make amends for. — **deal:** distribute.

182. vegetable meal: meat was seldom had by the poorer classes.

184. By narrowing his wants he fits himself for his country.

186. Breasts the keen air: a favorite verb in the eighteenth century. A few early editors mistakenly substituted the commonplace *breathes*.

187. patient angle: the epithet *patient* is transferred from the angler to his rod. — **finny deep:** water containing finned creatures.

190. savage: savage wild beast, a bear or wolf.

191. sped: performed, carried through with success.

191–198. For other domestic scenes of this type, which was somewhat staple in the eighteenth century, see the sixth stanza of the *Elegy*, and *The Cotter's Saturday Night*.

197. haply: perhaps.

214. redrest: supplied.

215. science: knowledge.

216. supplies: satisfies, or gratifies, its desire.

217. Unknown: they do not know how.

221. level: monotonous, unvaried.

228. morals: manners.

234. cowering: crouching, brooding.

243–254. These passages have strong autobiographical interest. Most editors compare with them Goldsmith's paragraph concerning his wanderings, in Chapter XX of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, quoted in the Introduction, p. xvi.

244. pipe: flute. Goldsmith was a skillful flute player. — **Loire:** the largest of the French rivers. *Loire* and *choir* are not now exact rhymes.

249. village: villagers.

253. gestic: *gesticulating* is the modern word. Gestic lore means the art of dancing.

256. idly busy: the rhetorical name for such a paradoxical phrase is oxymoron. So *humbler pride*, l. 36. For a striking example cf. Tennyson's line in *The Idylls of the King:*

> And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

265–266. This couplet refers to the French.

273. tawdry: has an interesting etymology. See the dictionary.

276. frieze: coarse woolen cloth.

277. cheer: fare, allowance of food.

283. Methinks: it seems to me.

286. rampire: archaic for *rampart* or *dike*. Dikes and ramparts have reclaimed a large part of Holland, below the sea level, from inundation.

289. Spreads its long arms: in the first edition this began:

That spreads its arms.

297. around: adverb. — **wave-subjected:** below the sea level, and needing to guard against the inroads of the sea.

305. An unfavorable and somewhat prejudiced picture of the Dutch follows.

306. The allusion in "liberty itself" is not clear.

309. This same judgment occurs in *A Citizen of the World*. "A nation once famous for setting the world an example of freedom is now become a land of tyrants and a den of thieves."

311. bent: stooping to yoke.

313. Belgic sires: Belgic ancestors of the dwellers in Holland, the ancient Belgæ. In Goldsmith's day Belgium was not an independent state, and *Belgic* did not mean the same as now. The real ancestors of the Dutch are, however, Batavian and Friesic rather than Belgic.

317. genius: guiding or presiding spirit; feminine because associated with *muse*.

318. Much the same praise of Britain is to be found in *The Citizen of the World*, Letter CXIV.

319. lawns: glades. — **Arcadian:** originally used of Arcadia in southern Greece; since Vergil and the Renaissance, a generalized term, the ideal pastoral region of poets and romance writers.

320. Hydaspes: a river in India, a tributary of the Indus, the modern name of which is Jhelum. The epithet *famed* is imitated from the *fabulosus* of Horace, *Odes*, I, xxii, 8.

327. port: bearing. Lines 327 and 328 are in inverted order in the first edition.

330. By forms unfashioned: not formal; unconventional.

332. imagined right: right which they imagine to be theirs; what they think their rights.

335. Freedom: apostrophes to Freedom were frequent in the eighteenth century, attendant on the political views and movements of the

time. This was the period of Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death."

Goldsmith here points out that Freedom has its disadvantages as well as its blessings. It is especially cherished, he thinks, in England as over against foreign nations.

341. lordlings: acting as though little lords. Lines 341 and 342 are not in the first edition, and the four lines, 341 to 344, read:

> See, though by circling deeps together held,
> Minds combat minds, repelling and repell'd.

345. Ferments: political upheavals. Political feeling ran very high in Goldsmith's day. A passage in *The Citizen of the World* presents the idea in this line in similar language. — **imprisoned**: hemmed in by law.

347. the general system: the state, or society as a whole.

351. Fictitious bonds: factitious or artificial, as opposed to those of nature. Wealth and law have undue dominance as against talent and merit.

357. noble stems: noble families.

358. wrote: old past participle for *written*.

362. flatter kings, or court the great: this Goldsmith himself did not do. He was independent, like Johnson, and both dedicated their works to friends, not to patrons.

362–380. Two lines occupy the place of these seventeen in the first edition:

> Perish the wish, for, inly satisfy'd,
> Above their pomps I hold my ragged pride.

365. Freedom: another apostrophe. Cf. note on l. 335.

370. to secure: in order to secure them.

382–392. Goldsmith distrusted republics. His political sympathies were with royalty and he was a believer in the sovereign power of the king.

386. Cf. *The Vicar of Wakefield*, XIX, "What they may then expect may be seen by turning our eyes to Holland, Genoa, or Venice, where *the laws govern the poor, and the rich govern the law*."

388. The reference is to those who acquire vast wealth by unscrupulous means in India and return to purchase the votes of boroughs in England. A sentence from Macaulay's *Essay on Warren Hastings* is often cited to illustrate this passage, "The business of a servant of the company was simply to wring out of the natives a hundred or

two hundred thousand pounds, as speedily as possible, that he might return home before his constitution has suffered from the heat, to marry a peer's daughter, to buy rotten boroughs in Cornwall, and to give balls in St. James's Square." Such wealthy returned Indian adventurers were called "nabobs."

406. The smiling long-frequented village fall: in this passage is found the germ of *The Deserted Village.* Cf. Introduction, p. xxii.

410–422. This passage concerning the New World is more accurate in its references than the corresponding passage in *The Deserted Village.* Cf. ll. 343–358 and notes.

411. The Oswego is a river in northern New York, flowing from Lake Onondaga into Lake Ontario. Goldsmith also makes mention of it in his *Threnodia Augustalis,* II, 82. The name probably became familiar through the French and Indian wars.

412. Niagara: the penultimate accent, which is the older accent for this word, is still used in England.

416. The reading in the first edition is "takes its deadly aim." The usual epithet for the American Indian is not *brown*, but *red.*

420. Dr. Johnson's line. According to Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, "In the year 1783 he at my request marked with a pencil the lines which he had furnished, which are only line 420 and the concluding ten lines, except the last couplet but one." He added: "These are all of which I can be sure. They bear a small proportion to the whole." Dr. Johnson's lines are usually less smooth, or poetically effective, than Goldsmith's.

436. Luke's iron crown: two brothers, Luke and George Dozsa, Transylvanian nobles, headed a revolt of the Hungarian peasantry in 1514. George, not Luke, Dozsa, was taken prisoner by the adherents of the government, made to seat himself on a red-hot throne, wear a red-hot crown, and submit to other tortures, for allowing himself to be proclaimed King of Hungary. Some think that Goldsmith substituted *Luke* for *George* to avoid using the name of the English king, George III, in this connection; others point out that *George's* would not fit the poetical rhythm of the line. — **Damiens' bed of steel:** on January 1, 1757, Robert François Damiens stabbed Louis XV as he was entering his carriage at Versailles. The wound was slight, but Damiens was diabolically tortured by slow torture to make him give the names of his supposed conspirators. He was executed, in a barbarous manner, at the end of March.

437. but rarely known: modifies *axe, wheel,* etc., which are the subjects of *leave.*

NOTES ON THE ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

1. curfew: from the French *couvre* + *feu*, cover-fire. A bell rung every evening; originally, when introduced after the Norman Conquest, as a signal that all household fires be extinguished for the night. — **parting**: departing. Cf. note on *The Deserted Village*, l. 4.

2. wind: the original MS. has *wind*, often changed, somewhat ill advisedly, by editors, to *winds*. Undoubtedly it is the slow-moving line of individual cattle, not their mass, which the poet has in mind. As Dr. Rolfe says, the poet sees, not *it*, but *them*.

5–8. Note in these lines how the stillness is intensified. What words are onomatopoetic?

Possibly Gray derived suggestion for this stanza from the third stanza of Collins's *Ode to Evening*, published in 1747:

> Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat
> With short shrill shriek, flits by on leathern wing;
> Or where the beetle winds
> His small but sullen horn.

11. wand'ring: many words which are to-day trisyllabic in careful speech were dissyllabic in eighteenth-century pronunciation, as shown by the meter of the poems. Note *mould'ring*, l. 14; *twitt'ring*, l. 18; *Mem'ry*, l. 38; *Flatt'ry*, l. 44; *list'ning*, l. 62; *hist'ry*, l. 64; *ling'ring*, l. 88; *Mutt'ring*, l. 106; *fav'rite*, l. 110. The middle syllable has now been restored in these words through the influence, on lexicographers and speakers, of the written forms. — **bow'r**: in the original sense of chamber.

12. reign: used here perhaps in the older sense of kingdom or realm.

13. elms . . . yew-tree: familiar trees in English churchyards. Professor Hales thinks that as the poet stands in the churchyard he thinks only of the poorer people, because the better-to-do lay interred inside the church, mainly for two reasons: (1) the interior of the church was regarded as of greater sanctity, and all who could sought a place in it; (2) when elaborate tombs were built, they were built inside the church, for the sake of security. As these two considerations ceased

to have power, the inside of the church became comparatively deserted, except where ancestral reasons gave no choice.

16. rude: ignorant, untaught.

20. shall: what difference had *will* been used here? — **lowly bed**: is this to be taken literally, or does it refer to the *narrow cell* of the preceding stanza?

22. ply her evening care: typical eighteenth-century poetic language, substituting the general or abstract for the specific household task or tasks which the poet had in mind.

26. glebe: soil or turf. — **broke**: obsolete form of the past participle, surviving to-day only in dialect or in colloquial speech, as do so many archaic forms and usages. Cf. *hisn*, *right* as an adverb, etc.

29. Ambition: Gray, like Goldsmith, is fond of using these personified abstractions, so in vogue in the eighteenth century but disliked in the poetry of the next period. Other cases in the *Elegy* are *Grandeur*, l. 31; *beauty*, *wealth*, l. 34; *Honour*, l. 43; *Flatt'ry*, l. 44; *Knowledge*, l. 49; *Penury*, l. 51; *Luxury*, *Pride*, l. 71; *Forgetfulness*, l. 85; *Contemplation*, l. 95; and the instances in the Epitaph.

30. obscure: not an exact rhyme with *poor* of the last line of the stanza.

33. boast of heraldry: pride of high birth. Heraldry is the art or science of recording genealogies.

35. Awaits: *hour* is the subject, not the object, of *awaits*. Many editors unnecessarily change this verb to *await*.

37. fault: for explanation, see the stanza, ll. 49–52.

39. fretted vault: the arched roof of the church, ornamented with fretwork.

41. storied: an urn on which is carved an epitaph, or "story." Cf. "storied windows," Milton's *Il Penseroso*, l. 159. — **animated**: lifelike.

42. mansion: used here in the root sense of the place where one resides.

43. provoke: call forth. Latin *pro* + *vocare*.

47–48. Some of those buried here had perhaps the native ability to have been kings or poets.

50. unroll: early books were rolls of parchment. Compare the word *volume*, from the Latin *volumen*, a roll. In legal phraseology the term remains synonymous with books. Cf. *Parliamentary Rolls*. The modern book form rests on the tablet form, adopted because, since it enabled both sides of the page to be used, it was the less expensive as well as the more compact form.

51. rage: often used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the sense of inspiration, enthusiasm.

52. genial: a favorite epithet in the eighteenth century.

53. ray serene: a Miltonic word order. Milton often followed a noun by its epithet, now a standard poetic inversion.

What relation has the stanza, ll. 53–56, to the preceding?

57. Hampden: in 1636 John Hampden, a cousin of Cromwell, refused to pay the ship-money tax which was levied illegally by Charles I.

60. Cromwell: Gray shared the eighteenth-century prejudice against Cromwell. The latter's character and purposes were much misunderstood until considerably later.

In the original form of the poem, Gray had Tully (Cicero) and Cæsar instead of Milton and Cromwell. Why did he change?

61. The great age of Parliamentary oratory was just dawning when the *Elegy* was published. The elder Pitt was already famous for his eloquence (Hales).

What is the main predicate of the stanza, ll. 61–64?

63. As Walpole's long, peaceful administration had done (Hales).

66. growing virtues: the growth of their virtues.

67. See the reference to Cromwell, l. 60.

71–72. A reference to the patronage system, from which professional writers were breaking away in the days of Gray and Goldsmith. Cf. Introduction to *The Deserted Village*, pp. xi–xii.

At this point, in Gray's first MS., followed these four stanzas, with which the *Elegy* was to have ended:

The thoughtless world to Majesty may bow,
  Exalt the brave and idolize success;
But more to innocence their safety owe,
  Than Pow'r, or Genius, e'er conspir'd to bless.

And thou, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead,
  Dost in these notes their artless tale relate,
By night and lonely contemplation led
  To wander in the gloomy walks of fate:

Hark! how the sacred Calm that breathes around,
  Bids every fierce tumultuous passion cease;
In still small accents whispering from the ground,
  A grateful earnest of eternal peace.

No more, with reason and thyself at strife,
  Give anxious cares and endless wishes room;
But through the cool sequestered vale of life
  Pursue the silent tenor of thy doom.

73. madding: raging, distracted. Dr. Johnson speaks of "the madded land," *Vanity of Human Wishes*, l. 30.

Does the first line of the stanza modify *wishes* of the next line, or *stray*, i.e. into forbidden paths?

75. Explain the meaning.

77. The preceding stanzas, ll. 13–76, really constitute the poet's elegy proper over those buried in the churchyard. — **these bones**: the bones of these.

78. still: always, as in Shakespeare.

79. rhimes: the better and historic spelling is *rimes* (O. E. *rīm*, number). The perverted spellings, *rhime*, *rhyme*, or *ryme*, are due to the influence of *rhythm*, from the Greek.

81. unletter'd Muse: the rude verse of some rustic poet. Cf. also l. 72. The terms *Muse*, *Muses*, so in vogue in English poetry after the period of the classical renaissance as eventually to become hackneyed, have now dropped almost entirely out of use.

82. The eighteenth century was much given to elaborate epitaph and elegy writing. The funereal literature of the period is very great. Cf. the works of Pope, Goldsmith, Watts, and many minor poets. Poetic epitaphs have grown much less common, although still found sometimes in country places.

84. teach: Mitford thinks that Gray originally wrote "to teach," but altered it afterward for the sake of euphony, making the grammatical correctness give way to sound.

85. a prey: is this phrase the appositive to *who*, or does it complete the predicate *resign'd*?

Dr. Johnson especially liked the stanza, ll. 85–88. Why?

89. This stanza gives the poet's answer to the questions of the preceding. Hales suggests that the answers in its four lines form a climax, picturing (1) the near approach of death; (2) its actual advent; (3) the time immediately succeeding that advent; (4) a still later time. The desire of loving remembrance persists even when all is dust and ashes.

90. pious: used in the sense of the Latin *pius*, i.e. prompted by affection and devotion.

92. wonted fires: meaning? Historically, *wonted* is a double past participle. The old verb *wone* (O.E. *wunian*, Ger. *wohnen*) had for its past participle *woned*, giving *wont*, as in *was wont*. In *wonted* the *-ed* suffix has been added twice over.

93. For thee: i.e. for Gray himself. The poet imagines himself buried, like those over whom the *Elegy* was pronounced, in a country

churchyard. Next to the author's personal approach to his subject in the opening stanzas, it is probably this picture, drawn not without touches akin to humor, of the poet as he might have appeared to the chance observer, which is remembered most distinctly by the average reader.

95. chance: perchance.

97. swain: see note on *The Deserted Village*, l. 2.

101. The first draught of the poem had this stanza as follows:

> Him have we seen the greenwood side along,
> While o'er the heath we hied, our labour done,
> Oft as the woodlark pip'd her farewell song,
> With wistful eyes pursue the setting sun.

105. Hard by: an idiomatic use of *hard*. So Tennyson's "Hard on the river," *Lancelot and Elaine*, l. 75. Cf. also *close by*, *fast by*.

111. Another: i.e. morning.

115. read: the ability to read was not so common in the eighteenth century that it could be taken for granted. — **lay**: is this word wholly appropriate as referring to an epitaph?

116. Here was originally inserted the following stanza, which Gray afterward cut out because he thought it too long a parenthesis in this place:

> There scatter'd oft, the earliest of the year,
> By hands unseen are show'rs of violets found;
> The redbreast loves to build and warble there,
> And little footsteps lightly print the ground.

The epitaph that follows applies in spirit, though not literally perhaps, to the poet himself, in his assumed character as writer of the elegy. In any case the poet seems to have been thinking of himself in these lines.

119. Science: knowledge, learning. — **frowned not**: i.e. smiled.

In a letter to G. E. Woodberry, Wendell Phillips Garrison (*Letters and Memorials of Wendell Phillips Garrison*, pp. 78–79) discusses the meaning of lines 119 and 120 of the *Elegy* as follows: "What bothers me in the verse in question is the conjunction, since, in your view, Melancholy's marking of Gray would have to be a sort of kindness. Higginson and, I think, most readers, take the opposite view. The youth labored under three disabilities: (1) humble origin, (2) whatever Science did by not frowning, (3) having a melancholy turn of mind. All belong in one category, else I feel the need of a disjunctive but."

APPENDIX

CHARACTER OF THE POOR PARSON

FROM

CHAUCER'S PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a povre PERSOUN of a toun;
But riche he was of holy thoght and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parisshens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,
And in adversitee ful pacient;
And swich he was y-preved ofte sithes.
Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,
But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
Unto his povre parisshens aboute
Of his offryng, and eek of his substaunce.
He coude in litel thyng han suffisaunce.
Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,
But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
In siknes nor in meschief to visite
The ferreste in his parisshe, moche and lite,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.
This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte;
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;
And this figure he added eek therto,
That if gold ruste, what shal yren do?
For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;
And shame it is, if a preest take keep,

A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
By his clennesse, how that his sheep shold live.
He sette nat his benefice to hyre,
And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to London, unto seynte Poules,
To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,
Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;
He was a shepherde and no mercenarie.
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to synful man nat despitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his techyng discreet and benygne.
To drawen folk to heven by fairnesse
By good ensample, this was his bisynesse:
But it were any persone obstynat,
What so he were, of heigh or low estat,
Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.
A bettre preest, I trowe that nowher non is.
He wayted after no pompe and reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,
But Cristes lore, and his apostles' twelve,
He taughte, but first he folwed it hymselve.

THE CHARACTER OF A GOOD PARSON

FROM

DRYDEN'S TALES FROM CHAUCER

A parish priest was of the pilgrim train;
An awful, reverend, and religious man,
His eyes diffused a venerable grace,
And charity itself was in his face.
Rich was his soul, though his attire was poor;
(As God had clothed his own ambassador;)
For such, on earth, his bless'd Redeemer bore.

Of sixty years he seem'd; and well might last
To sixty more, but that he lived too fast;
Refined himself to soul, to curb the sense;
And made almost a sin of abstinence.
Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,
But such a face as promised him sincere.
Nothing reserved or sullen was to see:
But sweet regards; and pleasing sanctity:
Mild was his accent, and his action free.
With eloquence innate his tongue was arm'd;
Though harsh the precept, yet the preacher charm'd.
For letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky;
And oft, with holy hymns, he charm'd their ears:
(A music more melodious than the spheres:)
For David left him, when he went to rest,
His lyre; and after him he sung the best.
He bore his great commission in his look:
But sweetly temper'd awe; and soften'd all he spoke.
He preach'd the joys of heaven, and pains of hell;
And warn'd the sinner with becoming zeal;
But on eternal mercy loved to dwell.
He taught the gospel rather than the law;
And forced himself to drive; but loved to draw,
For fear but freezes minds; though love, like heat,
Exhales the soul sublime, to seek her native seat.

To threats the stubborn sinner oft is hard;
Wrapp'd in his crimes, against the storm prepared;
But, when the milder beams of mercy play,
He melts, and throws his cumbrous cloak away.
Lightning and thunder (heaven's artillery)
As harbingers before the Almighty fly:
Those but proclaim his style, and disappear;
The stiller sound succeeds, and God is there.

The tithes, his parish freely paid, he took;
But never sued, or cursed with bell and book.
With patience bearing wrong; but offering none;

Since every man is free to lose his own.
The country churls, according to their kind,
(Who grudge their dues, and love to be behind,)
The less he sought his offerings, pinch'd the more,
And praised a priest contented to be poor.

Yet of his little he had some to spare,
To feed the famish'd, and to clothe the bare:
For mortified he was to that degree,
A poorer than himself he would not see.
True priests, he said, and preachers of the word,
Were only stewards of their sovereign Lord;
Nothing was theirs; but all the public store:
Intrusted riches, to relieve the poor;
Who, should they steal, for want of his relief,
He judged himself the accomplice with the thief.

Wide was his parish; not contracted close
In streets, but here and there a straggling house;
Yet still he was at hand, without request,
To serve the sick, to succour the distress'd;
Tempting, on foot, alone, without affright,
The dangers of a dark tempestuous night.

All this the good old man perform'd alone,
Nor spared his pains; for curate he had none.
Nor durst he trust another with his care;
Nor rode himself to Paul's, the public fair,
To chaffer for preferment with his gold,
Where bishoprics and sinecures are sold;
But duly watch'd his flock by night and day,
And from the prowling wolf redeem'd the prey,
And hungry sent the wily fox away.

The proud he tamed, the penitent he cheer'd;
Nor to rebuke the rich offender fear'd.
His preaching much, but more his practice wrought:
For this by rules severe his life he squared:
That all might see the doctrine which they heard.

For priests, he said, are patterns for the rest:
(The gold of heaven, who bear the God impress'd:)
But when the precious coin is kept unclean,
The sovereign's image is no longer seen.
If they be foul on whom the people trust,
Well may the baser brass contract a rust.

The prelate, for his holy life he prized;
The worldly pomp of prelacy despised,
His Saviour came not with a gaudy show;
Nor was his kingdom of the world below.
Patience in want, and poverty of mind,
These marks of Church and Churchmen he design'd,
And living taught, and dying left behind.
The crown he wore was of the pointed thorn:
In purple he was crucified, not born.
They who contend for place and high degree,
Are not his sons, but those of Zebedee.

Not but he knew the signs of earthly power
Might well become Saint Peter's successor;
The holy father holds a double reign,
The prince may keep his pomp, the fisher must be plain.

Such was the saint; who shone with every grace,
Reflecting, Moses-like, his Maker's face.
God saw his image lively was express'd;
And his own work, as in creation, bless'd.

The tempter saw him too with envious eye;
And, as on Job, demanded leave to try.
He took the time when Richard was deposed,
And high and low with happy Harry closed.
This prince, though great in arms, the priest withstood;
Near though he was, yet not the next of blood.
Had Richard, unconstrain'd resign'd the throne,
A king can give no more than is his own;
The title stood entail'd, had Richard had a son.

Conquest, an odious name, was laid aside,
Where all submitted, none the battle tried.
The senseless plea of right by providence
Was, by a flattering priest, invented since;
And lasts no longer than the present sway;
But justifies the next who comes in play.

The people's right remains; let those who dare
Dispute their power, when they the judges are.

He join'd not in their choice, because he knew
Worse might, and often did, from change ensue.
Much to himself he thought; but little spoke;
And undeprived, his benefice forsook.

Now, through the land, his cure of souls he stretch'd;
And like a primitive apostle preach'd.
Still cheerful, ever constant to his call,
By many follow'd, loved by most, admired by all.
With what he begg'd, his brethren he relieved,
And gave the charities himself received.
Gave while he taught, and edified the more,
Because he showed by proof, 't was easy to be poor.

He went not with the crowd to see a shrine;
But fed us, by the way, with food divine.

In deference to his virtues, I forbear
To show you what the rest in orders were:
This brilliant is so spotless and so bright,
He needs no foil, but shines by his own proper light.

DESCRIPTION OF STOKE POGES[1]

. . . It is, however, at Stoke-Pogis that we seek the most attractive vestiges of Gray. Here he used to spend his vacations, not only when a youth at Eton, but during the whole of his future life, while his mother and his aunts lived. Here it was that his *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, his celebrated *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, and his *Long Story*, were not only written but were mingled with the circumstances, and all the tenderest feelings of his own life.

His mother and aunts lived at an old-fashioned house in a very retired spot at Stoke, called West End. This house stood in a hollow, much screened by trees. A small stream ran through the garden, and it is said that Gray used to employ himself when here much in this garden, and that many of the trees still remaining are of his planting. On one side of the house extended an upland field, which was planted round so as to give a charming, retired walk; and at the summit of the field was raised an artificial mound, and upon it was built a sort of arcade or summer-house, which gave full prospect of Windsor and Eton. Here Gray used to delight to sit; here he was accustomed to read and write much; and it is just the place to inspire the *Ode on Eton College*, which lay in the midst of its fine landscape, beautifully in view. The old house inhabited by Gray and his mother has . . . been pulled down, and replaced by an Elizabethan mansion. . . . The garden, of course, has shared in the change, and now stands gay with its fountain and its modern green-house, and, excepting for some fine trees, no longer reminds you of Gray.

The woodland walk still remains round the adjoining field, and the summer-house on its summit, though now much cracked by time, and only held together by iron cramps. The trees are now so lofty that they completely obstruct the view, and shut out both Eton and Windsor. . . .

[1] From William Howitt's *Homes of the Poets* (1846).

. . . The Manor-house, Stoke Park, . . . was then in the possession of Viscountess Cobham. This place and the manor had been in some remarkable hands. The manor was so called from the Pogies, the ancient lords of that name. The heiress of this family, in the reign of Edward the Third, married Lord Molines, who shortly afterward procured a license from the king to convert the manor-house into a castle. From him it descended to the Lords Hungerford, and from them to the Hastings, earls of Huntingdon, and was afterward the residence of Lord-Chancellor Hatton. Sir Christopher Hatton had won his promotion with Queen Elizabeth through his graceful person and fine dancing, and is very picturesquely described by Gray, with "his shoe-strings green, high-crowned hat, and satin doublet," leading off the brawls, a sort of figure-dance then in vogue, before the queen. Sir Edward Coke, having married an heiress of the Huntingdon family, became the next possessor; and here, in the year 1601, he was honored with a visit from Elizabeth, whom he entertained in a very sumptuous style. After the death of Viscountess Cobham, the estate was purchased by Mr. William Penn, chief proprietor of Pennsylvania, and descendant of the celebrated William Penn, the founder of that state.

This old manor-house has since been swept away, as Gray's residence is also, and a large modern mansion now occupies its place. This was built from a design by Wyatt, in 1789, and has since been altered and enlarged. It is built chiefly of brick, and covered with stucco, and consists of a large square center, with two wings. The north, or entrance front, is ornamented with a colonnade, consisting of ten Doric columns, and approached by a flight of steps leading to the Marble Hall. The south front, 196 feet long, is also adorned with a colonnade, consisting of twelve fluted columns, of the old Doric order. This is surrounded by a projecting portico of four Ionic columns, sustaining an ornamental pediment; and again, on the top of the house, by a dome.

Stoke Park, thus interesting both on account of these older associations, and of Penn and Gray, is about a couple of miles from Slough. The country is flat, but its monotony is broken up by the noble character and disposition of its woods. Near the house is a

fine expanse of water, across which the eye falls on fine views, particularly to the south, of Windsor Castle, Cooper's Hill, and the Forest Woods. About three hundred yards from the north front of the house stands a column, sixty-eight feet high, bearing on the top a colossal statue of Sir Edward Coke, by Rosa. The woods of the park shut out the view of West End House, Gray's occasional residence, but the space is open from the mansion across the park, so as to take in the view both of the church and of a monument erected by the late Mr. Penn to Gray. Alighting from the carriage at a lodge, I entered the park just at the monument. This is composed of fine freestone, and consists of a large sarcophagus, supported on a square pedestal, with inscriptions on each side. Three of them are selected from the *Ode to Eton College* and the *Elegy*. . . . The fourth bears this inscription:

This Monument, in honor of
THOMAS GRAY,
Was erected A.D. 1799,
Among the scenery
Celebrated by that great Lyric and Elegiac Poet.
He died in 1771,
And lies unnoted in the adjoining Church-yard,
Under the Tomb-stone on which he piously
And pathetically recorded the interment
Of his Aunt and lamented Mother.

This monument is enclosed in a neatly-kept garden-like inclosure, with a winding walk approaching from the shade of the neighboring trees. To the right, across the park, at some little distance, backed by fine trees, stands the rural little church and churchyard where Gray wrote his *Elegy*, and where he lies. As you walk on to this, the mansion closes the distant view between the woods with fine effect. The church has often been engraved, and is therefore tolerably familiar to the general reader. It consists of two barn-like structures, with tall roofs, set side by side, and the tower and finely tapered spire rising above them at the northwest corner. The church is thickly hung with ivy, where

The moping owl may to the moon complain. . . .

The structure is as simple and old-fashioned, both without and within, as any village church can well be. No village, however, is to be seen. Stoke consists chiefly of scattered houses, and this is now in the midst of the park. In the churchyard,

> Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
> Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
> Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
> The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

All this is quite literal; and the tomb of the poet himself, near the southeast window, completes the impression of the scene. It is a plain brick altar tomb, covered with a blue slate slab, and, besides his own ashes, contains those of his mother and aunt. On the slab are inscribed the following lines by Gray himself: "In the vault beneath are deposited, in hope of a joyful resurrection, the remains of Mary Antrobus. She died unmarried, Nov. 5, 1749, aged sixty-six. In the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, here sleep the remains of Dorothy Gray, widow; the tender, careful mother of many children, ONE of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her. She died, March 11, 1753, aged sixty-seven."

No testimony of the interment of Gray in the same tomb was inscribed anywhere till Mr. Penn, in 1799, erected the monument already mentioned, and placed a small slab in the wall, under the window, opposite to the tomb itself, recording the fact of Gray's burial there. The whole scene is well worthy of a summer day's stroll, especially for such as, pent in the metropolis, know how to enjoy the quiet freshness of the country, and the associations of poetry and the past. The . . . railway now will set such down in about one hour at Slough, a pleasant walk from Stoke.

The late Mr. Penn, a gentleman of refined taste, and a great reverencer of the memory of Gray, possessed his autographs, which have been sold at great prices. It is to be regretted that his house, too, is now gone, but the church and the tomb will remain to future ages.

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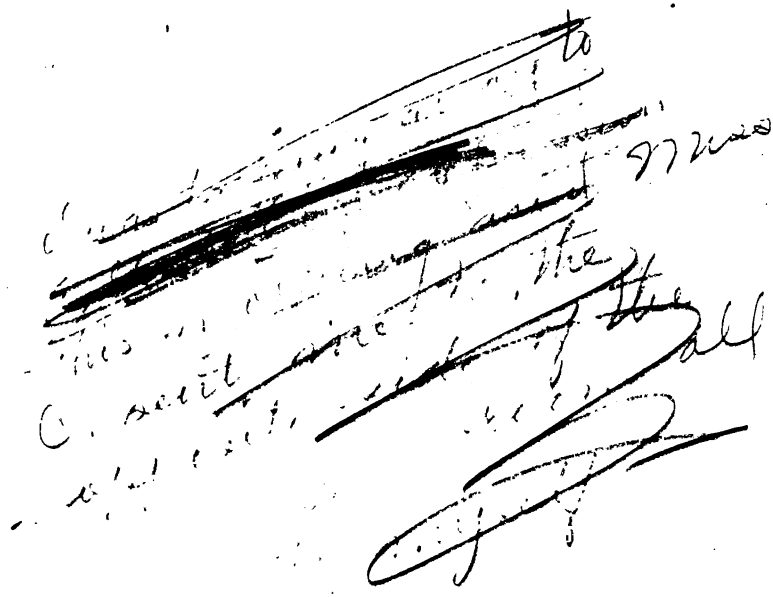
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